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THROUGH JADE GATE AND CENTRAL ASIA

[p. i]

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Frontispiece.

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A TIBETAN CHORTEN.

"The Chorten is considered to symbolise the five elements into which the body is resolved at death—earth, water, fire, air, and ether."

[p. ii]

THROUGH JADE GATE
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and

CENTRAL ASIA

An Account of Journeys in Kansu, Turkestan and the Gobi Desert

BY

MILDRED CABLE

AND

FRANCESCA FRENCH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY
REV. JOHN STUART HOLDEN, D.D.

With Illustrations and a Map

LONDON
CONSTABLE & CO LTD
1927

[p. iii]

"Anybody might have found it but—
His Whisper came to Me!"

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INTRODUCTION

THE three ladies of whose hazardous journey across the largely untracked spaces of North-Western China and Central Asia this book tells, are distinguished members of the China Inland Mission. After having built up a splendidly successful school-work in the province of Shansi during a period of twenty-one years' strenuous service, to their own surprise and that of their friends they realised a fresh missionary call under circumstances in which most people, even those so devoted as missionaries characteristically are, neither expect new orders nor are ordinarily capable of responding to their challenge. 114

The sense of 'something lost beyond the ranges,' in the vast territories of the far North-West practically unoccupied by the Christian Church, impelled them to pull up stakes and fare forth. And it will be recognised by those who read this simply told and thrillingly interesting narrative that their journey takes high rank in the stories of pioneer heroism and endurance. It would not be true to say that 'they went out not knowing whither,' for they had long studied the available maps and pondered the known problems of the course they must traverse. Nor were they unaware of the certain difficulties which, as women, they would have to meet in any attempt at itinerant evangelism amongst tribes for the most part custom-bound and prejudiced. Long residence in China takes all the sentimental glamour out of travel prospects, and they knew fully 000

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600 the unavoidable hardships and inconveniences—or at any rate some of them—they would encounter. It was no ' stunt ' adventure on which they set out ; and this record of their experience is no varnished tale. If, as they tell their story, they say little as to their impelling motive and sustaining inspiration, it is only because these form the background to which they have long become habituated. This is essentially a Christian story.

It is invidious to discriminate between the events they so simply set forth, where all are so far removed from normal experience. Yet, for most of those who will take up this book and read without pause to its last page, their unprecedented journey across the great Gobi desert, marked by a trail of light, will form the outstanding interest of the record. It falls to the lot of few travellers to make that trek ; and this story is unique in that the authoresses are the only Western women who have ever accomplished it. They make light of the difficulties, for the joy of service sustained them and love lent wings to feet that were often weary enough.

What they saw and learned is of profound interest and of no small importance alike to the geographer, the philologist, and the student of the human race. They have noted natural phenomena with accuracy, and have read with sympathetic insight the traits of peoples still primitive. Their story adds in no ordinary degree to the tale of knowledge; and in a way which makes it of value not only to the expert but to the ordinary reader also. But it is the story that lies enfolded within this story,—the untold epic of dauntless courage, heroic endurance and absorbing passion that makes this book unique. Those to whom the writers are as yet but names will readily identify them as belonging to the Order of the Steadfastly Set Face, by whose members the world's darkest places are still, as of old, illumined and its arid wastes transformed into gardens of God.

J. STUART HOLDEN.

CHINA INLAND MISSION,
LONDON, *July*, 1927.

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Thanks are due for the use of photographs of Hami, taken by the late Dr. Morrison, and for one of a Tibetan Obo taken by the Rev. D. Learner.

PART ONE

FROM HWOCHOW TO KANCHOW

CHAPTER I

SEALED ORDERS

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THE large, official envelope marked 'On His Majesty's Service' lay on the table, and the whole projected campaign seemed brought a stage nearer as we opened it, and read its announcement to the effect that 'In virtue of these Passports issued to Evangeline French, Francesca French and Mildred Cable, of the China Inland Mission, it was requested and required that they should be allowed to pass without let or hindrance, and be afforded any help of which they might stand in need in travelling through the Provinces of Shensi, Kansu, Mongolia and Sinkiang.' Overhead hung the map of 'the Great North West,' as that part of China has been styled. It was a Missionary Survey map, and showed the greater portion of Kansu in black, indicating by this means the extent of the territory hitherto untouched by any Christian mission. The challenge of that which the map represented had roused us to response, and all preparations had now been made for leaving the familiar Province of Shansi for that remote region.

It had seemed to be our destined life-work during the twenty-one years of its development—the strenuous, persistent effort to build up that which had resulted in the large complex organisation of the Hwochow compound. The ramifications of the Church under the direction of the Chinese Pastorate, in immediate succession to the foundation as laid by Pastor Hsi, the overflowing Higher Grade Girls' Schools, as well as the Training School for Women, were the joy and gratification of the whole community. From this important centre for thirty years the Lord Jesus Christ had been proclaimed in clear accents as King and Saviour of mankind. Many had enrolled under His banner and declared their allegiance to Him. It had therefore seemed to all our friends in Hwochow as a foregone conclusion, that the three women, who had grown to middle-age in their midst, should end their lives in that spot. The venerable Pastor Wang had even suggested the advisability of purchasing an available piece of land, outside the City Wall, which might eventually hold the tombs of their beloved teachers, who could rest side-by-side with their pupils 'until the Day dawn and the shadows flee away.' But for months past a secret consciousness of being in receipt of 'Sealed Orders' was upon us, marked, '*To proceed to the Great North-West to a place at present unknown,*' and we recognised that, for us Missionaries, as with all soldiers, such instructions from the Commander-in-Chief brooked no delay, and that consequently all the dear, familiar ties—the severing of which had hitherto seemed unthinkable—must now be broken. The last term, therefore, was brought to a close, the last Sunday Meetings were over, the last Communion Service was ended, and the last farewells said; then in the early midsummer morning of June 11, 1923, we found ourselves standing waiting on the edge of the motor-road, which stretches in one straight line from North to

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South of the Province of Shansi. And presently we stepped into our rickshaws ; we looked one last look into our weeping friends' eyes ; and in a few moments passed out of sight of the City which had given us our loved work and home for so many, many years.

Leaving all our special belongings at Hwochow, we took with us for our journey only such personal effects as we then considered positively necessary, but a few weeks later, when robbers relieved us of several of our boxes, we discovered our modest requirements to be amply met by the slender remainder of our goods, and from this time forward the higher estimate of our real needs steadily diminished. Brigandage was then at its height in Honan and Shensi, through which Provinces we had to pass. At that very hour two women Missionaries were in the hands of robbers, while the whole countryside was being terrorised by roving bands ; the outlook, consequently, was not encouraging. We were given no option, however, in the matter of travelling under military escort, for, on the morning of our departure from the railhead, it was with misgiving that we saw the approach of a band of six wild youths, armed with rifles, and wearing cartridge-belts, which presumably held a few rounds of ammunition.

Still, in conformity with our usual habit, we soon made ourselves familiar as to the name and age of each, as well as with the various details of each one's family circumstances. We had been given to understand that we should keep the one escort for at least three days' journey, at the end of which time the men would demand our visiting-cards, and we should reward their vigilance with a suitable and adequate *pour-boire*. Nevertheless, at the end of the first day they reported themselves to an officer at the camp in the town where we spent the night, who, for some reason, decided to change the guard. Our visiting-cards and tip were accordingly handed over, and with mutual compliments and good wishes, we parted. The next day the new soldiers took us only half a day's march, when they also demanded the visiting-cards and usual accompaniment ; whereupon, seeing that this was going to be an expensive business, we gave them rather less than we considered the men of the previous day had earned. This incident occurred in a crowded market-place where the excited and uncertain mob surged to and fro, eager for any event which might lead to high words. In a few minutes the Honan blood was up, and with loud voices and excited gestures they demanded exorbitant sums for their services, while the surrounding crowd took sides in the discussion. Years of experience had taught us that such situations can only successfully be met by the adoption of an attitude of heavy indifference, and thus we sat, like three images of Buddha, expressionless, while our officially appointed defenders called on their protective deities to see to it that our carts were overturned, our baggage stolen, and we ourselves the victims of the brigands, in retribution for our miserliness ! From this time on, each successive escort took us less and less distance on our way, until the demands for money for a three-mile ride became so outrageous that we informed them we neither desired nor valued their protection, which on our part had been wholly unsolicited. They came or stayed according to their superior officer's wish, but not one cash would we pay until we reached our destination. From this hour trouble ceased, and a suitable band escorted us to the gates of Sian.

It is difficult adequately to describe the dilapidated condition of the inns along this road. The towns had been taken and retaken alternately by government troops and brigand bands, till not a door, window-frame, or loose furniture of any kind remained in the mud-sheds where guests were supposed to be entertained. Yet even so each night brought us a sense of gratitude that this forlorn shelter was provided, and we slept peacefully to the soothing sound of the crunching of their fodder by the tired mules. But sometimes the quiet hours were interrupted by the wild gallop of an unharnessed beast ; and once we awoke at midnight to see the form of a gaunt, white mule, like a phantom in the moonlight, standing within our room, licking its lips over the last crumb of the breakfast laid ready in view of an early start.

The condition of Honan was in striking contrast with that of the neighbouring Province of Shansi, where a firm and able hand had held brigandage in check all through the troubled years since the introduction of the Republic. The roads were deserted by ordinary travellers, and for many hours at a time we would meet no one. Both the carters and ourselves were oppressed by the sense of uncanny loneliness in a district which normally should have been teeming with life. Once, in a deep gully, at the turn of the road, suddenly we came upon a marching regiment of soldiers in ragged uniforms from which all the badges had been torn. Lean, dirty and dishevelled, they eyed our carts and baggage with fierce and hungry glances. In a second our own military escort vanished, only to reappear a full hour later, when the coast was clear. 'We were watching from a point of vantage,' they explained on joining us. The carters, however, had hastily ranged their teams to one side, so as not to incommode the troop. 'Road guests! road guests!' was the terrified whisper which passed from one to the other. Many hundreds filed past, and later we learnt that it was

000 a Moslem regiment from distant Kansu—marching whither? At that time, mercifully, we were not aware of what atrocities such men were capable; but on that journey the Hand that led protected.

CHAPTER II

SIAN TO PINGLIANG

492 THE beauties of Sian have been too often and too well described to need any mention of them here, much as we enjoyed our visits to the Mosque, the Nestorian Tablet, and other monuments of historical interest. After a short stay our litters were hired for the eighteen stages which lay between us and Lanchow, the provincial capital of Kansu. [493] Our experience of this mode of travel in Shansi was considerable, and in view of the many minor accidents with which we had met, it was no satisfaction to us to find that in this case the matting-covered body of the litter was set high over the backs of the mules, instead of hanging between them, as those had been to which we were accustomed. 'It is for greater safety in the bad mountain roads,' was the reason given, but the knowledge that in the case of a probable overturn we were farther from the ground, brought little comfort. The well of the litter was ballasted with our boxes, and over these were laid the bed-bags, containing our wadded quilts. Cushions, rugs, lunch baskets, and all the miscellaneous articles which can be classed as 'hand-luggage,' were slung into the back of that portion reserved for our personal accommodation, in hope that these varied and incongruous objects would, somehow or other, amalgamate into a solid support for our weary frames. There was,

of course, the inevitable fuss with the litter-men, who, when they saw the baggage (which in this case was compact and well under the recognised load suited to the occasion); commenced the invariable protest: 'Too small and too heavy! My mules can never drag this over Lupan mountain. If you had made big, soft bundles they might have been heavier still, and I would not have said a word, but such a dead weight, who can deal with it?'

We learnt later that in the loading of a camel its grumblings commence as the first bale is placed on its back, and continue uninterruptedly until the load is equal to its strength, but as soon as it shows signs of being in excess, the grumbling ceases suddenly, and then the driver says: 'Enough! put no more on this beast!' This is a test equally applicable to the Mongol's camel, and to China's carter.

Into the tunnel-like aperture we finally crept, while with a sickening heave, first the back shafts, then the front were lifted into position on the creaking wooden saddle, whereupon the restive mule dashed for the narrow gate of the courtyard, while the yelling bystanders rushed to its head, to stop the seemingly inevitable smash. Thus through the West Gate of Sian we plunged, past the great well which supplies the city with water, and into the open country where the roads were inches deep in mud. The mules, however, which had stood for several days in the stable, were excited, consequently when we came to the mud-pits, where the driver left us to pick his way on a narrow side-path, two of them seized the chance of liberty to pull in opposite directions for one agonising moment, thus flinging the litter and its occupant to the ground, but fortunately with no unhappy results. With frenzied curses yet with skilful and careful movements, 492 the muleteers now came to the rescue ; and in a short time all was in order, so that, apart from the fact that the feet and legs of man and beast were encased in a sheath of thick mud, which gradually hardened to the consistency of plaster of Paris, no damage was done.

241 The Sian plain is a fertile land, with vast wheat-fields, where in late autumn the persimmon groves make a beautiful picture. The widespreading foliage of dark glossy leaves, symmetric in form, together with the golden fruit hanging in profusion from the bending boughs, are very distinctive features. The wayside food, also, was the best we had met with in China, and before long we entered the pear-growing district around Pinchow, where extensive orchards stretch for miles on all sides. Here, besides filling every chink of our luggage with the pears, we considerably added to that elastic quantity known as 'hand-baggage,' and for several days we pillowed our heads on lumpy sacks of the fruit.

322 A few hours before entering the border of Kansu, we
[443] passed a number of booths in which were sold numerous
small articles carved from the wood of the jujube tree
(*Zizyphus jujuba*), which supplies a fine quality of dark,
red wood pleasing to the eye, and so hard as to be
almost indestructible. A plantation of these trees
346 surrounds a temple backed by enormous rock, on which
has been carved the figure of a gigantic sitting Buddha.
After wandering around and between its huge feet, we
climbed the many flights of steps leading to a gallery
723 on a level with the prodigious face. This Buddha
forms one of a group of three colossal images, the chief
of which, within Tibetan fastnesses, stands—with foot
thrust forward—waiting for the appointed hour when he
must move towards his sleeping brother, reposing out-
stretched, in a temple of distant Kansu. Him he must

rouse, and together they will then join the Shensi sitter, when, their band being complete, they will accomplish their long-appointed mission of raising mankind. 773

At nightfall we passed the Kansu border. The first incident which made us aware of this fact was an official proclamation with the two Chinese ideographs, meaning Kansu, heading it. Simultaneously the character of the road changed, and we found ourselves moving in the darkness through an avenue of stately trees, our hearts beating high, for we had now reached the Province indicated on our 'Sealed Orders,' although we knew not as yet the locality to which we were going. 491

That night, our first in Kansu, our bed was in a stable. Merely a cave hollowed out of the loess-cliff, it held a little mud *kang*,[1] on which the travelling carter was wont to sleep while the mules fed at his side. The walls were black with the dirt of generations, the floor was littered with damp stable-manure, and our hand-luggage was laid in the manger. The door was a low, irregular aperture; no opening had been left for a window; the flicker of the linseed-oil lamp filled the cave with heavy shadows, and though the night was very cold the *kang* had not been warmed. 485

We had often tried to picture the real conditions of the inn at Bethlehem, and it seemed to us that night that we had come much nearer to their realisation.

By the side of our cave, raised three feet from the ground, was a small hollowed recess, about the size of a large baker's oven. The opening was screened by a filthy, hanging rag, and within lay three men, tasting the sensuous enjoyment of the opium pipe. The space was so small that the feet of the smokers were thrust outside, and though the night was bitter and their 276

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[1] A brick or mud bed heated with a fire.

276 conditions unspeakably wretched, they yet cared not at all, for they had temporarily banished reality, and moved among elusive shadows, until the sentinel grey dawn should recall them to the grim world of Fact.

735 The largest city through which we passed was Pingliang. On the steps of a temple outside the city gate, we saw a motley crew of several hundred beggars basking in the midday sunshine. They displayed such a variety of physical ills, and provided such an exhibition of tatterdemalion garments, as to make one question how existence under such conditions could be endured. Nor can the life of a Kansu beggar hold any sense of security or hope of alleviation. All too familiar is the sight, on a winter's morning, of the naked corpse of a man, woman or child, frozen to death on the side path ; and there is no one to remove the corpse, unless it be the tradesman, under whose frontage he
735 sought shelter and died. The gathering which we
575 witnessed at Pingliang was an assembly of the Beggars' Trade(less) Union, when they collect an enforced contribution from each business house in the town—a tax which none dared refuse, since their appointed Head controlled a band of defenders, who were ready to deal summarily with any shopkeeper who might offer a blow in lieu of the dole. The police were helpless in face of this Corporation ; and thus the beggar asserted his right to live.

797 For an hour our litters threaded their way through the crowded streets before we reached the Mission Compound, where we were the guests of a Swedish missionary and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Tõrnvall. Our hearts warmed with admiration for the unassuming man, on whose face long suffering had left indelible marks. With him we visited the spacious buildings of

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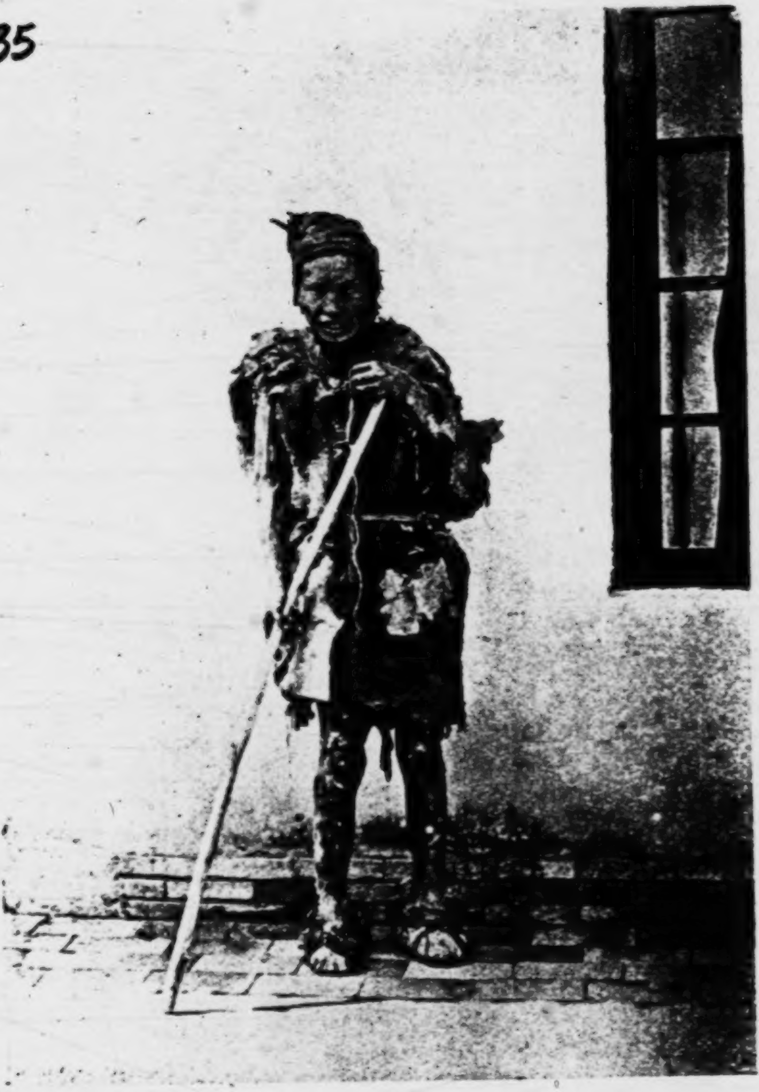

A Chinese Beggar.

"All too familiar is the sight of the corpse of a man frozen to death on the side path."

To face page 10.

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797 the Church, and the hospital, where he daily received men and women patients. At the time of our meeting his position in the city was amply assured, but many years previously the people of Pingliang had combined to refuse him all admittance by forbidding anyone to sell him food, and it was only due to the secret kindness of one woman in supplying him with a meal of flour and water pancakes each day for several months, that he existed at all; but in the end he overcame every opposition, outlived suspicion and came to be regarded with universal respect.

066 We studied together the map of Kansu, and he told us of his own various itinerant journeys to districts reputed to be almost uninhabited, but where large audiences had collected whenever he made halt to proclaim the Gospel. Laying his finger on a spot at the extreme North-Western boundary of the Province, he said: 'Here stands the Great City of Suchow. You who care so much for Kansu, this is the town which awaits your coming!'

CHAPTER III

THROUGH THE EARTHQUAKE AREA TO LANCHOW

487 On the second day after leaving Pingliang, we took the Pass which rises to nearly nine thousand feet over the Lupan Shan. All the morning we had followed the course of a rushing stream, which we crossed and
494 recrossed many times. It was still early winter, and the ice was not strong enough to bear the weight of our litters, so that we often had the unpleasant experience

499 of breaking through into the water below. On these occasions the driver is always compelled to leave the litter-side, and controls his beasts from a distance by means of shouted directions, enforced by skilfully-thrown stones. A pebble alighting on the mule's nose warns him to back, while one hitting him in the hind-quarters is equivalent to an order to move on. In spite of the undoubted understanding existing between man and beast, there is a moment of extreme nervous tension on the part of the occupant of a litter, when the ice collapses and the startled animal crashes into water of quite uncertain depth. From the moment, however, that we took the well-made road leading over the mountain, the anxieties of the valley were (temporarily) at an end, and we were free to enjoy the fine views which every turn of the road revealed to us. The short-cut downhill was less pleasant, for the road was so steep as to be only just negotiable.

731 The next few days brought us near to the centre of devastation by the great earthquake of January 1921. The face of the land had been completely altered by the mighty upheaval, and its surface still suggested the semblance of boiling mud suddenly petrified. In one place a mountain had been removed, in another a large lake of brackish water had suddenly appeared. Scarcely a human habitation was to be seen, for the cliffs had overwhelmed all the cave-dwellings which formerly the industry of man had hollowed out. Nevertheless, the road over which we travelled was newly-made, while huts had already begun to appear at intervals. They were poor little places, composed of four mud walls, a mud roof, a mud bed, and a mud trough at the back where a few sheep could be fed, and the children we met were almost naked, in spite of the then extreme cold. A missionary in charge of the relief works assured us

that two hundred thousand people had perished in the 731
disaster.

Before reaching Lanchow we crossed a wide river by 491
means of a well-built and handsome bridge, which had 744
also been constructed with famine relief funds, and 731
which now provided the means for saving scores of
lives, a heavy yearly toll having hitherto been exacted
by the treacherous mountain torrent.

On leaving the town of Tsingningchow we travelled 797
for seven days before touching another Mission station
—a tremendous gap in the chain, so it seemed to us in
those days, unused as we were then to the wider
horizons of the Great North-West. Half-way stood the
little market-town of Anting, to which Mission authorities
had directed our attention as the possible goal of
our quest; but as we walked through its streets with
every perception alert, we felt the firm conviction that
our appointed destination lay still farther ahead.

One of our litter-men was a Moslem—proud and 583
cantankerous, as all of his kind. A somewhat grimy, 292
white, woollen cap was the badge of his belief, and at 533
brief intervals he would raise his head and sing a wild
snatch of the 'Song of the Wandering Dove,' a weird
melody greatly loved by the men of his race, and sung by
them in eulogy of home when on a journey, the barbaric
intervals of which produced a most dramatic effect in
those lonely gullies. An altercation frequently arose 485
between this man and the others, on the subject of the 563
choice between Moslem or Gentile inns, the former being 783
distinguished by the painted sign of a teapot, and the
mystic words: 'KIAO MEN' (member of the
assembly). The boasted 'cleanliness' of the Moslem
inn is, however, not visible to the naked eye, but
manifests itself otherwise, namely, in endless bickerings
with the travellers on matters of purification connected

783 with material or cooking utensils. The suspicious
485 atmosphere created was always most irksome to us,
563 feeling as we did that our cleanliness much exceeded the
demands made by these self-righteous Pharisees.

The *kang* on which we slept was of a different con-
354 struction from those we had met with elsewhere, this
485 being due to the fact that the only fuel obtainable on
this journey is animal droppings. These *kangs* were
372 covered with movable boards, under which a hollow
space is left for piling up the dry horse-dung, which, once set alight, will smoulder for hours. The fumes are laden with a nauseating smell, which so permeates the traveller's bedding and clothing as to be noticeable for weeks. These same fumes produce an extraordinary effect on the woodwork of the room, which rapidly gains a surface equal in colour and polish to the best
291 old oak. The clothes of the people had now changed
from indigo-dyed cotton to undyed sheep's wool. In
286 every hamlet the older men sat in the sun spinning yarn,
[887] or knitting socks for themselves on two needles ; this
is accomplished by means of a diagonal down the centre
291 of the foot and a seam at the back. The better-dressed
287 boys wore garments of white felt. No seam was
necessary in the whole coat, as it was shaped in the making to the size and form of the wearer. The felt is home-made, and many times we saw men treading out the macerated wool which is moulded to the shape required and dried in the sun. Shoes, coats and hats are made in this way, and whole villages are given up to the industry.

361 Lanchow, the capital of Kansu, is reached through a
maze of narrow gullies. It is beautifully situated on the swift-flowing Yellow River, and is backed by the Blue Lotus Hills. Its streets are wide and crowded,
491 and its population cosmopolitan. A splendid iron

bridge has replaced the old bridge-of-boats, which until 491
quite recently spanned the great flood. Green sedan- 634
chairs, we found, were still used by the officials, and the 493
Yamens still retained the grand style which had existed
under the Manchu Government—a pomp which entirely
vanished from Shansi with the entry of the Republic,
and has also since passed from Kansu, with the arrival
of Marshal Feng's armies. We spent three weeks in 797
Lanchow, staying most of the time in the central China
Inland Mission compound, but paying visits to the
Borden Hospital on the further bank of the river, and to
the large boys' school at the foot of the Blue Lotus
Hills, both of which are under the auspices of the China
Inland Mission, which is the only society working in
Lanchow. The whole visit was brimful of interest, and
we were particularly struck with the way in which the
Christian community had impressed itself on the civic
life of the town.

The great Yellow River, during summer months, 502
supplies a waterway by which the journey to Peking
may be accomplished in about thirty days by raft.
These rafts are floated by means of inflated goat and [501]
bullock skins, which are roped together and carried
very swiftly down-stream. Though the journey is
popular, being quicker and easier than if taken by road,
yet the element of danger is always present, and Dr.
George King, at whose hospital we stayed when in
Lanchow, was drowned in May 1927 when travelling by
this route. His raft caught on a sandbank, and in
helping the men to release it, he fell into the water and
was swept away.

During the winter months the river is frozen over and can be crossed on foot. When the stream is freezing, and while it is thawing, the toll of accidents is always heavy. During the whole of our stay the surface of the

502 water was carrying considerable ice-floes, but one day, at a narrow part of the bed some miles further down, they were arrested, and in a few hours the whole river was piled up, mass on mass, with ice. The impact was so powerful that blocks were flung wildly about in all directions, and with one mighty solidifying spasm the iron grip closed upon the waters, and the Yellow River was ice-bound for months.

CHAPTER IV

LANCHOW TO LIANGCHOW

487 THE journey from Lanchow to Liangchow can, under favourable conditions, be accomplished in one week. Half-way between lies the town of Pingfan, at the angle where the cross-roads leading westwards to Sining and Kokonor meet the main North-West road.

133 A few miles outside Lanchow we traversed the dry
bed of an ancient inland-sea, circular in form. The
high-water mark showed clearly far overhead near the
top of the surrounding cliffs, where the stone was worn
into the shape of pillars. The bed was strewn with
finest sand, and all the water procurable was very salt.
253 It was here that we met the first herd of yak, which was
being driven to Lanchow for slaughter, as a large amount
of the beef sold in these cities of the North-West is yak
meat.

376 The fourth day brought us to the Pingfan valley,
256 down which a watercourse rushed between banks of
ice, supplying the power to work a number of flour
mills which were grinding, even though their structure
788 was hung with enormous icicles. Here, for the first
time, we passed a prayer-wheel, erected below a basin

which a tiny spring kept overflowing. Green mosses 788
lined the bed of the crystalline rivulet, and the diamond
drops reflected the sunshine. The wheel turned with
a subdued creak, which seemed almost like the murmuring
of the prayer inscribed on its lines of chamfered
edges—Om mani padme hum—'Hail thou jewel in the
lotus flower'—the offering of a blinded people to its
undiscerned god.

A mile apart from each other stand two walled 361
cities,[1] the more imposing of the two being the Manchu
town formerly occupied by the pensioners of the ruling
dynasty, but which now consists of a great enclosure of
uninhabited or ruined houses, so that in a space equal
to the area of a large town, at the present hour only
six or eight families are living. Of the remaining
former inhabitants many have been massacred, others
have fled, and the ranks of the beggars have been
replenished by these truly unfortunate people. The 366
Chinese city consists of quiet streets busy only on market
days, the shops of which being so poorly provided with
the necessities of life that vegetables are brought a
three days' journey to be sold here. Its western wall
is flanked by a suburban thoroughfare composed of
inns, wheelwrights' and blacksmiths' shops, which,
together with food-vendors, supply all the necessities
of traveller, carter, and muleteer. Some very fine 563
temples crown the summits of the surrounding hills, and 782
parties of Tibetans riding to and fro on the Sining
road, leave offerings of silken *khada*[1] hanging to the
idols, before which their obeisance has been made.

In the first home which we visited in Pingfan we met 634
a man who was courier to a woman-magistrate of the
aboriginal tribes. Her residence was in Liencheng—
Lotus City—but she constantly visited Pingfan on

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[1] Votive scarves.

[1] [Valley of Pingfan--Analyst]

634 magisterial business. She held her office by inherited right, and was reported to us as a person of remarkable ability. This chance meeting subsequently led to some correspondence with this very interesting lady, to whom we sent a present of a well-bound copy of the New Testament, and from whom we received a cordial invitation to visit her at Lotus City, and to instruct her people, an invitation which so far we have not been
142 able to accept. Père Huc, in writing of Pingfan over a hundred years ago, spoke of the ruddy complexion and brown or even red hair not infrequently seen, as well as of the religious habits of its people. We were immediately struck by the same characteristics. One afternoon we were visited by a group of fortune-tellers. An old woman, aged seventy, was escorted by two younger ones, whose hazel eyes, red cheeks and brown hair differentiated them entirely from the Chinese
010 around. The object of their quest was quite definite: 'We have heard,' said the old woman, 'that you are able to show us how to obtain remission of sins, and we have come to ask you to instruct us.' Two days later she was back again: 'All you told me is true,' she began; 'my son has been reading to me the book you sent, and I want some more of the same kind.'

All too quickly the month of our stay passed by, and the missionaries, whose house we were occupying, returned; we then moved on to Liangchow. On the day of our departure, we were deeply touched by the love and courtesy shown us by these townsfolk. Presents of food for the road were brought to us by several of our newly-made friends, and after dark a little boy arrived with a bag of extraordinarily good anthracite supplied by the mines of Chenfan, and suitable for burning in our foot-warmer braziers.

Whether in winter or in summer, whether by litter

Whether in winter or in summer, whether by litter
or by cart, the Kansu roads present dangers to the 491
traveller. In hot weather thunderstorms or cloudbursts in the hills are not unusual, and on these occasions mountain torrents will rush down with such force as to carry everything before them, nor have a cart and mules any power to withstand the strength of the spate. Each of the large rivers is so subject to fluctuations of stream, and unexpected currents, that each year some of the more reckless villagers lose their lives by drowning. In winter the rivers are ice-bound, and supply the traveller with many a nerve-racking experience, as we found when it was necessary to cross the ice in darkness, avoiding, by the help of a tiny lantern, the deep holes and fissures.

The last day before entering Liangchow, and the
two days after leaving it, are days of torture, owing to
the stony nature of the road. Even the very streets [363]
of the town are as stony as the famous Portland pebble
beach. Liangchow was the last outpost held by 797
foreign missionaries in North-West China, and has been
occupied by the China Inland Mission for the past forty years. Six days further on lies the city of Kanchow, and here lived a Chinese missionary and doctor who, five years previously, had taken up his residence there. From him and from his Church-officers we had received a most cordial invitation to pay them a visit, and having accepted to do so, we were soon on the march once more.

We delayed, however, a few days in the little town of 733
Yungchang, distant two stages from Liangchow, the inhabitants of which have sunk to the lowest imaginable depth through opium smoking. Communal life here is not regulated, as in other places, by the meal hours, but by the recurring period at which the craving for the drug grips the population with invisible but relentless tentacles, so that on every *kang* the little lamp is

733 simultaneously lit, the pipe produced, and the pillows spread for the wretched feast. This town might easily [448] be one of the most prosperous of Kansu, being the [237] centre of the lamb-skin trade, and at mid-January the merchants come from all quarters to buy the tiny, soft skins of the lambs, killed on the fourteenth day of their existence. Large sums of money change hands in Yungchang, yet all is consumed in smoke, and spent upon that which satisfieth not. The men are gaunt and [567] dishevelled, the women keep indoors for lack of decent clothing, and Yungchang supplies the slave market with its required commodity of little girls for the great cities.

167 We were leaving our inn one morning, when some Chinese called our attention to the fact that a foreigner, 'one of your own people,' was begging at the door. We found a crowd collected round a ragged Russian, who was begging his way to Peking. The road over which we were travelling was the *Via Dolorosa* of the Russian refugees, who, driven forth by poverty or unwillingness to register their acceptance of the Soviet rule, find themselves homeless exiles on the face of the globe. For some months before our arrival a great stream of suffering humanity poured down this highway, in every stage of poverty and utter destitution. Until the great war of 1914, the peoples of the East were under the delusion that race-solidarity, which in them supersedes the instinct of individual nationality (strong though that be), was also impregnable in the West. From this time, however, European prestige was entirely shattered; and the sight of homeless, penniless whites swelling the ranks of Chinese beggars, and of helpless women becoming the concubines of Chinese men, was a violation of their sense of fitness: nor have the common people ever recovered from the shock caused by these unthought-of proceedings.

CHAPTER V

FROM YUNGCHANG TO KANCHOW

As we left Yungchang and were walking across the fields, a young woman alighted from her ass to join us, and to satisfy her curiosity upon certain matters concerning us. Judging ~~us~~ by our speech and style of dress, she accepted us as fellow-countrywomen ; conversation, however, revealed some striking differences of habits between us and those of all her previous acquaintances. It transpired that our feet had never been bound, and yet we were obviously not of the slave class, as also that we were literate.

'Can you read that proclamation on the wall ? '

'Why certainly ' ; and we read it to her.

'My husband cannot do that, and he was at school for three years. Can you write also ? '

'We can,' was the answer.

'How clever you are. How many children have you ? What, none ? Not one of the three ? Unmarried ! Why, you have white hairs ! On whom will you depend when you are really old ? Perhaps you are too clever to get old as we do. Look at your hands how soft and smooth they are ! Compare them with mine. I have just come from the temple of the Goddess of Fecundity, where I have paid a vow ' ; and with a meaning look in her eyes she added, 'Do you go there too ? '

'We go to no temple,' was our answer, 'for we worship the true God, Who made heaven and earth. He is our Heavenly Father, and He provides for us.'

This led to further talk, and at the cross-roads, where our paths diverged, she said : 'I have heard of your

000 country. You come from Woman's Land, don't you?' This mythical kingdom, to which she referred, is a fabulous place known by name to all Chinese. Its inhabitants are solely women, and doubtless by virtue of their isolation, they there develop independent and Amazon-like qualities!

499 We had been accompanied from Yungchang by Mrs. Kao, the wife of the Chinese Missionary already referred to, for she, with two small children, under the escort of one of the Kanchow deacons, had come travelling forward to meet us. The road over which we now passed was varied in character, and presented many interesting features, besides being very rough. The cart alternately bumped over boulders, was dragged heavily up and down sandhills, or squelched its way through semi-solid mud-lakes, and we encouraged each other with the reminder that now, as in the days of the first great missionaries, the work on which we were engaged must of necessity be carried on through hardship and labour, hunger and thirst, in heat and in cold, and in dangers oft from all that lay before us in the Unknown. Our starting-time was never later than 4 a.m., and was often earlier, and in the evening the darkness frequently overtook us still on the desolate expanse far from any habitation. On one occasion, being diverted from the main track simply by reason of its being impassable, we sat for hours leaning back against the Great Wall of China, as our cart was up to the axle in a mud-pit, from which all efforts hitherto had failed to extricate it. There was no hope, therefore, but from the assistance of chance passers-by. At the end of what seemed an interminable time, it was with much relief that we saw, slowly emerging through an opening in the wall, the head and body of an ox, which animal fastened wondering and meditative eyes

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upon us sitting there. And the ox was soon followed by a *man riding* a donkey, whose spirit apparently so failed at the sight of the mud-pit and ourselves, that after standing for a moment transfixed, it sank peacefully to the ground as if in a state of mental collapse. The rider consequently had no option but to dismount, and come to our assistance, and in a few moments the ox and the ass, together with our own mules, triumphantly drew the cart from the watery depths.

Our next stage lay over sandhills sparsely covered with a scrubby growth. Here, by means of our field-glasses, we were able to follow herds of antelopes, which paused to watch the movements of our cart-wheels with fascinated interest, but which always flee at the approach of a pedestrian. On either side the horizon was bounded by mountain ranges, silhouetted against the deep, blue sky, and on one afternoon the wind blew with terrific force from the Tibetan hills, chilling us to the bone in a blinding cloud of sleet. The strip of land which divides the snowclad Richthofen Mountains from the sandy Mongolian hills was narrowing, so that when we reached Kanchow we were at the point where the two ranges most nearly approach each other. On the last morning of this stage we left our inn at 3 a.m. in the hope of reaching Kanchow early, but by 3 p.m. we began to get into difficulties. The cart was, as usual, in the slough of despond, and we were, as usual, standing by the roadside trying to keep up the family spirits by teaching Mrs. Kao's little girl a finger-game : 'This is a cup, and this is a cup, and this is a pot of tea,' a fictional feast of Couéistic value.

At the moment when our courage reached its lowest ebb, for the short daylight was rapidly waning and there seemed no prospect of extricating the cart, two galloping horsemen appeared on the horizon, and in a

494 few moments Dr. Kao swung himself from the saddle, and advanced to meet us with cordial and cheering words. He turned from us to the carter, who, with an abashed grin, acknowledged his presence.

'Hello, Old Sheep!' he exclaimed. 'You out of jail again? That last trip of yours turned out badly.' Then turning to us he said: 'This carter has just finished his third term of imprisonment for destruction of travellers' property, through carelessness. Whatever induced you to hire him? He'll never get in to-night. But we must do so.'

361 A few swift orders were then given, and the second
133 horseman galloped back to the city for help. Meanwhile as many of the party as could be crowded
494 into our own small cart drove on, while the rest proceeded on foot. The soil formation in and around Kanchow is peculiar. The city is built on a crust of earth covering underground springs. During the period when the water is still frozen the place stands firm, though buildings are thrown out of the perpendicular, but during the spring months the earth trembles and yields under the slightest pressure. On this occasion a thaw had set in, and water was welling up from below the surface, so that the condition of the roads baffles description. We picked our way cautiously over this swampy, unstable district, and where rivers intersected our path, the cart was obliged to take us over in relays. Horsemen now appeared coming to our rescue with galloping steeds, two saddled for riding and two more ready to be hitched to the carts. These fine horses, we were told, belonged to a Mongol Prince, who was staying in Doctor Kao's house.

326 It was long after sunset when we entered the great gates of Kanchow city. We passed through between the flaring smithies which always ply their trade in the

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neighbourhood of the inns, and threading the dark 326
streets with their many turnings, where the dim roofs of temples could just be distinguished, we at last alighted at the door of a large compound, closely shut in behind high walls.

In a few minutes we were seated before a delicious 797
meal and a longed-for cup of tea, in a room which to some might have seemed bare, but which to us presented the very acme of comfort, for we had been travelling for eighteen hours in the teeth of a bitter North-Easter, with no food but cold dough-cakes fried in pungent, linseed oil, and we were broken with fatigue. It was after midnight before we laid our weary heads upon our pillows. We had left Hwochow in June; it was now March, and we had already come about 1,500 miles since leaving the railhead.

CHAPTER VI

A CHIEFTAIN OF THE ALTAI MOUNTAINS

Shortly after dawn, we were conscious of the peculiar sense of Sabbath-quiet that permeates a Christian community, which, of course, is alone in recognising the Lord's Day in a heathen land. Everyone on the compound though he may own but one garment, is expected to wear it newly-washed and clean. Every room and courtyard has been swept and tidied up, and from sunrise the sound of singing is heard. On this day also every carpenter or mason employed is given his day's wages, although no work is done by him.

This was a red-letter day for the Kanchow Church; 600
indeed, far more so than we were at first in a position to

realise, for whereas we believed ourselves to be spending the first day of a brief visit among them, they knew better, being in possession of certain spiritual facts not yet communicated to us. The rally, therefore, at morning service brought every Church member and enquirer to the festival.

The inward meaning only became clear to us when Dr. Kao, rising to address the congregation, called them to witness that during four years he, with them, had constantly prayed that God would send them women of His choice to supply that which was lacking in their Scriptural instruction and upbuilding.

'As you know, brethren, it was not young women that we were needing, but those seasoned by experience, trouble, and hard work. Therefore I would have you remember that when we prayed it was for two elderly women, who yet must have retained all the vigour of youth, as, I need not remind you, Kansu is no place for the feeble! All these things were in our minds, nor did we see for ourselves where those could be found to present such a combination of qualities, yet behold! God has supplied us, not with two of this unusual type, but with three! Here they sit with us this morning, and if you look at them you can see how old they are by their grey hairs; yet the very fact that they have reached here at all, proves them capable of enduring hard conditions. Until recently I feared that they might settle down in some city further south, and it was in view of this that two or three of you rode out with me three weeks ago to a Tibetan Lamasery that we might secure absolute quiet to lay this matter before God. He has granted us over and above what we asked; let us now thank Him.'

In the course of the meeting reports were received from delegates who had been out during that week on Evangelistic trips, two having recently returned from an expedition to the region known as Kow Wai, which lies beyond Suchow, and outside the Great Wall of China. Their statements were listened to with deep attention by all, and it became evident to us that this Church was in the true Pauline succession of recognising itself debtor to all men.

We were soon met with a definite request to spend the summer months instructing a class of Christian men and women, and our only demur was caused by our determination that nothing should be allowed to interfere with and deter us from advancing into the unevangelised land, of which we had now reached the threshold, but, to our joy and surprise, we found that this subject had also been foremost in the thought of Dr. Kao and his band.

'We have a proposal,' he said, 'for a plan which, if it appeals to you, will give us the greatest satisfaction. If you will make yourselves responsible for their training, I will guarantee a band of men and women to accompany you on your pioneer journeys.'

In a moment the hitherto 'Sealed Orders' lay open before us, and we recognised the adequacy of the provision which made possible the organisation of a Preaching Band, where the gifts of each, whether Easterner or Westerner, would find their full expression

Our fellow-guests at that moment under this hospitable roof were a Mongolian Prince and his Princess. The Prince, who was a former patient of Dr. Kao's, accompanied by an immense retinue, was taking one of the fantastically long journeys which are common in this part of the world, in order to pay a vow at a distant Tibetan Lamasery. He was chief of a Kalmuk tribe, whose home is in the more distant regions of Mongolia, among the Altai Mountains. When yet nine days' distant from Kanchow, his little son developed pneumonia, and the Princess, in an agony of anxiety, and fearing for his life, had ridden nine stages in five days, holding the little boy in her arms, that she might reach Dr. Kao before it was too late. A galloping horseman dashed through the streets to bring word of her arrival, and rooms were prepared for the reception of herself and immediate suite. The condition of the child was critical, and the disease was nearing its crisis when the father overtook them. On being warned that the child's life still hung in the balance, he lifted his head with the authoritative gesture of an autocratic ruler and exclaimed : 'That is your business, not mine. I brought him here, and you must heal him. You are the doctor, not I.'

The Princess only consented to be cramped between four walls until her tent could be erected in a large courtyard. Into this the little patient was moved, and it was here that we first met her. Our impression on entering the tent was that some Arabian Night's fancy had materialised before our eyes. The ground was spread with beautifully-woven rugs, while inlaid boxes stood against the wooden trellis-work, which formed the lower support of the felt tent. The smoke from a smouldering fire rose through the opening above, which likewise served to admit light and air. On a low divan lay the sick child, and his mother sat beside him. At our entrance she rose with a stately grace, and advanced to receive us. Her hair hung down in two long, glistening plaits, outlining the pure oval of her face, and was gathered into jewelled sheaths forming part of her regal head-dress. Jade, gold, and silver ornaments covered her breast, and a satin garment of sombre richness fell from her shoulders to her feet. A second tent held the servant, and was used as a kitchen.

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A MONGOLIAN PRINCESS.

"Her hair hung down in two long glistening plaits, outlining the pure oval of her face, and was gathered into jewelled sheaths forming part of her regal head-dress."

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000 The third tent was so small as to provide very limited accommodation even for one person, but here dwelt the family lama, and here he prepared his own food, which he ate alone. An enclosure held about twenty horses for immediate needs, as neither master nor man ever considered the prospect of walking, even the smallest distance. A few miles outside the city is a locality where pasture was plentiful, and here their flocks and herds were grazing. The miscellaneous company of body-retainers roamed at will over the compound. They climbed the roofs, peeped through holes in the paper windows, and pursued the doctor in search of medicines. The Prince himself was thirty-six years of age, and a man of magnificent physique. Blue-green eyes, set far apart in a tanned face, revealed an untamed and roving spirit. His simplicity was that of a child, but his look that of a warrior. His Chinese was none too fluent, but he was always accompanied by a half-breed interpreter, an almond-eyed youth, quick-witted, and ready with his tongue. A pistol and hunting-knife hung by the Prince's girdle, and one was in no sort of doubt that at the slightest offence the pistol would be rapidly used with unerring aim. Within a few days these liberty-loving people flagged under the restrictions of town life, and an order was given to strike camp and pitch the tents eight miles outside Kanchow. With amazing rapidity the goat-hair felts were rolled up, the inlaid boxes placed in their cases, and rugs strung into bales, the whole being secured to the pack-saddles of the kneeling camels, which, while chewing the cud, eyed the bystanders with a malicious, resentful look. The Princess herself rode her own splendid camel, whose saddle was of most curious inlaid metal-work.

The whole cavalcade then moved away to the vast pastures outside the city, and there Dr. Kao subsequently attended the little patient until he completely recovered. The result of this happy incident was a cordial invitation to visit the Kalmuk tribe of which the Prince was chief, and thus an entrance was made possible to an otherwise inaccessible people.

CHAPTER VII

A CHINESE MISSIONARY

Dr. Kao is a native of the Province of Honan. At the time when we reached Kanchow, he was in his thirty-sixth year. Tall, and strongly built, his mobile face and genial manner commend him to the stranger, and endear him to his friends. His parents were not Christian, but he himself became one at the age of sixteen. His first introduction to the Westerner, and to the Faith which he fearlessly preaches, was at a village fair, when, at the close of a solemn discourse, the hearers were requested to close their eyes, while prayer was offered on their behalf. With characteristic quick-wittedness, little Kin Cheng (for such is his first name) while appearing to cover his face with his hands, in reality converted his fingers into spy-glasses, the better to enable him to detect any suspicious act on the part of the strange man, who was, doubtless, using this means to take some nefarious advantage over his audience! His boyhood was spent under the stern discipline of poverty. Knowing within himself the capacity for absorbing education, he was yet removed from school after a few months' teaching, for though the education was free, his father would not give the needed money to provide him with necessary books.

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With the close of his school-life it seemed to the desperate boy that the door of liberation was closed for ever, and that a vendor of peanuts he must remain to the end of his days.

After a time, the resilience of youth restored to him some measure of hope, but though eminently a boy of action he found himself completely hemmed-in by circumstances. He knew, however, as a result of his intercourse with Christians, that God has promised to hear prayer, and to succour even a child in need, who should call upon His Name. For months, consequently, he besought God with a continual petition that he might have a ' chance in life.' The miraculous occurred when a letter came offering him work in a mission hospital, and from that time his path was cleared until he received his medical diploma. Being a man of remarkable humour, industry and adaptability, the Medical Profession afforded him an easy field for money-making. His company and presence were acceptable to rich and poor, and he was welcomed into Chinese Official circles on account of his nimble wit and amusing talk—valuable assets, undoubtedly, but such as bring the feet of a young man into slippery places. But for this man there could never be more than a temporary disunion from his aim, and, ambitious as he was, nothing less than the most worthy object could finally meet the demands of his aspiring nature. After various vicissitudes in the course of which some lucrative posts were offered him, the second great decision of his life was made in response to an inward Call bidding him leave Honan, and become a missionary in the far-off province of Kansu. This final determination was reached in the loneliness of a midnight hour, when, as he knelt by his bedside to say a formal prayer and acknowledge the Divine protection which had been his

600 throughout the day, a Voice came to him through the silence saying, 'Why do you thank Me? You know that your present life is in no wise My choice for you.' In a flash the whole gaudy construction of his self-arranged career stood revealed in its tinselled tawdriness, just as the shabby decorations of a theatrical scene appear under the rays of the noonday sun. The early dawn found the young man packing up his clothes, and preparing to leave the town without delay; and so soon as arrangements could be made, he, with his wife and two small children, were on the road to the North-West. He was at this time twenty-seven years of age.

After a period at the Lanchow hospital, he slowly made his way alone, preaching as he went, to the town of Kanchow. As he entered its gates, the same Voice which had spoken to him in distant Honan sounded again within, saying: 'This is the place of My Appointment for you.'

In Dr. Kao's own words: 'That day I walked through the streets of Kanchow with the drops of sweat falling from my brow, as I realised something of what lay before me.'

The first weeks of his stay were spent in shifting his lodgings constantly from inn to inn, each landlord discovering in turn that it was not conducive to good business to have an itinerant preacher occupying his rooms, for this man was of the kind that could not be quieted, and from early morning till late at night a motley crowd would hang around his door listening to his strange talk. After flitting again and again, and on more than one occasion returning from a house-hunting expedition to find his few belongings standing out in the courtyard, he secured the use of a room in a large temple. The priests in residence welcomed a diversion to the even tenor of their monotonous lives, and even derived considerable enjoyment from the racy talk and apt anecdote with which his preaching was enforced. Moreover, there was a medicine-chest and its contents, which are a never-failing source of joy to a Chinese heart, not to mention the diversion of tooth-drawing, and other minor surgical feats.

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One day a woman, whose jaw had been dislocated for some weeks, came as a forlorn hope to see whether this famed man, who alternately preached and healed, might save her from the lingering death with which she found herself faced. She arrived in a cart, escorted by a dozen women cronies, hurrying and hobbling up the street on their tiny feet, fearful lest they should be too late to see the fun. As soon as Kao appeared, the patient gave him a kowtow while her son besought him to favour her with his superior brand of medicine, and not to waste time by using less expensive materials upon her serious case. Dr. Kao made her sit on a bench, and realising how much of his future standing in the town depended upon a successful issue to this small but showy operation, he laid his fingers on her jaw, and the next instant a click was heard, and the woman was well. The crowd which had collected to watch the operation, and witness its success or failure, included soldiers, business men, Yamen runners, and all the temple priests, not to speak of a concourse of small children, whose business it is to carry the news of the town to every distant courtyard.

For the next few days the crowds surged in and out of the temple grounds, bringing with them sick folk at every stage of disease, slight or mortal. But the healing of the body was never Kao's primary object, and he seized his chance of proclaiming Christ to the large audiences. He stood boldly on the temple steps, and told all the people that gods fashioned by the hand of man were not gods at all, but only lumps of clay or chunks of wood. Such sentiments did not seriously annoy the temple priests, but certain individuals of importance in the town seized the chance of exciting the mob by saying: 'This fellow, Kao, is so disrespectful to the gods that we shall all suffer punishment at their hands, unless he be turned out of Kanchow.' For some hours the situation was critical, and it looked as if this would be his fate, but at the moment of greatest tension a wealthy patient, who was a member of the town council, arrived, and haranguing the mob, demanded that Dr. Kao be treated with the courtesy which was his due. 'I gave large sums of money toward the repairs of this temple,' he said; 'and if Dr. Kao be summarily turned out, as you threaten, you will refund me all that I have given.' With these words he dismissed the assembly.

A few days later the doctor was quietly approached with an offer to purchase a large piece of ground, including a small tumble-down house, standing in the centre, and he quickly closed with the offer. From that day, unfettered and unhindered, he preached the Gospel to all whose disease of the body or the soul brought them to his consulting-room, and the words which he addressed in the hour of danger to the inimical mob in the temple-court came true: 'You may turn me out of this temple to-day, but I declare to you, in the Name of the True God, that before many years have passed there will be a Christian Church in your city, for the Lord of Hosts is with me, and you are powerless to defeat Him.'

In process of time these prophetic words were realised. A suitable site presented itself, and a reasonable price was fixed; the transfer was concluded, and Dr. Kao's

Kanchow home and work were definitely located. The 000 land, however, was no more than a rough, irregular space, but the position being good, the shabby little house upon it was soon repaired, and made into a possible dwelling-place for Mrs. Kao and the children, who now came from Lanchow to join him. The open space then required to be enclosed by a wall, and in this job Dr. Kao took an energetic share, each morning, before the dispensary opened, driving down to the riverside and bringing back a load of stones for the foundations.

In the course of the next few years a convenient 797 dispensary, waiting-room and guest-hall were built, and[1] school-court and adequate class-rooms had been added about the time of our arrival. The Mission Compound thus became the most attractive building in the city, for, not only was the daily Peking newspaper posted outside the main entrance, but a blackboard, holding special items of news, hung beside it, while the front of the building was decorated with Christian posters constantly changed or renewed. Just inside the front door was the book-room, where Christian papers and a library were accessible to anyone who cared to use them ; here visitors, too, were received, and everyone was welcome ; moreover, the large space without was planted with trees, and was sanded to make a playground for the Kanchow street children.

Shortly before we arrived a small additional strip of 425 land, adjoining the premises, had also been purchased ; 789 the owner of which, after the deed was signed, was, as always, dissatisfied with the deal, therefore, according to custom, set out to terrify the purchaser by the use of a ritual which had never before been known to fail in securing at least a substantial *douceur*. Accordingly, one morning he sent a relative on ahead to announce

[1] [to the Mission at Kanchow--Analyst]

425 his arrival, and also his intention of sitting on this piece
789 of land to 'bask in the sun.' A few minutes later a strange figure could be seen walking down the street, one half of the face blacked while the other was white, and with party-coloured garments covering his limbs—the whole representing one of the greatly dreaded deities acting as Judge in the Buddhist Courts of Hell.

Naturally all the neighbours flocked to see the fun.

'What do you want ?' asked Dr. Kao.

'Just to sit and bask in the court,' was the answer.

'But the courtyard is mine.'

'So it is. I sold it to my loss, but what did you give me for the air and the sun ? I did not sell those, they are still mine.' A bystander here whispered to Kao, 'You *must* give him money, and get rid of him. You bought the land too cheap, and he will certainly bring ill-luck. It is a Kanchow custom ; but give him money and he will depart without bringing a curse on you.'

The answer to this was a front door thrown wide open, and a cordial invitation to the sun-basker to enter, for, not only were sun and air at his disposal, but the element of water also, with which the doctor was immediately prepared to wash his face !

Needless to say, the Presiding Genius of the Courts of Hell beat a hasty retreat, and never troubled the dauntless Christians again.

CHAPTER VIII

A CHINESE COMMUNITY

000 It is quite evident that a man of this calibre could not fail to attract kindred spirits. To see one whose qualifications placed him high in the ranks of citizenship,

cheerfully enduring hardness and privation, as well as 600 freely giving his services to the poor, gained him the respect of many. Young men from his own Province, who had come to the North-West in order to fill lucrative business posts, soon rallied round him, and before long some were convinced that the Gospel he preached was indeed the 'power of God unto salvation.'

The first convert was a woman who had been a frequenter of the temple-court preaching, and gradually an interested congregation met weekly for Sunday worship. From the larger circle, by the time we arrived, there had emerged a small group, whose whole time was given to the work and service of the Church. They lived with the Doctor on a communal basis. One of them had been trained to act as medical assistant, another was a very capable business man, through whose hands all moneys passed, and by whom the general accounts were kept. All medical fees, together with profits resulting from the Church-owned farm and flocks of sheep, were placed in a common fund, and used at the discretion of a small financial committee. It was by this means that they were able to meet the expenses incurred in connection with the Bible School, which was opened on our arrival.

We found ourselves handling an unusual group of men and women, who were young, enthusiastic and vigorous, and who were natives of six out of the eighteen Provinces of China. Though barely middle-aged, the Elder, Mr. Liu, was as a father in their midst. He distinguished himself among them all by a sense of experience of life, so that to him naturally fell the duty of investigating any difficult case, and of representing the Church where exhortation or reproof was necessary. Both he and his wife were natives of a district which has gained a reputation for the cleverness, industry, and capacity of its women, so that in matters of weaving, dyeing, cooking, and household economy, Mrs. Liu was a recognised authority. Their little boy of five years old would play in the courtyard while his parents sat at their desks. They had received him as a gift of the gods, he having been granted to them in middle-life, after a pilgrimage to a famous temple, where his father had recorded a vow in verse on the walls of a shrine. As a Christian, the terms of that vow might not be met, so he discharged the debt by dedicating his child to the service of the One God, and by stating the fact at the side of the original poem.

Our best student was Mr. Chang, who combined exceptional mental ability with the gifts of perseverance and industry. As a boy of eighteen, he left his Honan home and came to Kansu hoping to find a lost brother who had not been heard of for some years. Insufficiently supplied with money, at Liangchow he came to the moment when he had spent his last coppers on six small rolls of bread, of which he ate one a day until he reached Kanchow. By this time he was faint, starving, and utterly discouraged. As he rested by the road, just outside the city gate, a horseman passed, and for a moment their eyes met. That rider was Dr. Kao, who, looking down at the unfortunate boy, in whose face he read the unmistakable signs of hunger and despair, longed to help him, and immediately felt the strong conviction that they would meet again.

Young Chang wandered through Kanchow without a cash in his pocket, hoping for the charity of a free lodging, and in the last inn of the most remote suburb he found it. Pleased with his well-bred manner, the landlord said: 'I see that you come from Honan. There is a Dr. Kao here, also from your Province. He is building a house, and I should not be surprised if he gave you a job. Go and see him.' Thus it was that Dr. Kao and Chang, who were to learn to love each other as father and son, first met. In payment for his food, Chang was engaged to mix mortar, and to carry bricks and other building material as required, and this he willingly did, in spite of the fact that his hands were soon blistered with the unaccustomed toil. His faithfulness and industry received their due reward when later on he was promoted to personal attendance on the doctor in his dispensary. Each morning at dawn it was his duty to sweep the courtyards, and while doing so through the open windows he could hear his master praying aloud, and often caught the petition that he himself might come to know Jesus Christ as his Saviour. The kindness and just treatment which had been meted out to him in this household had already made an indelible impression on his mind, but to feel that prayer was offered for his conversion by his employer was an expression of interest on his behalf such as he had never imagined possible. The springs of love and gratitude within him were stirred to their depths, resulting in a receptivity of mind and quickened understanding, which enabled him to comprehend in some degree the 'love of Christ which passeth knowledge.' Before long he said with his whole heart and strength : 'Thy God shall be my God.'

Friend and constant companion of Mr. Chang was Mr. Kwo, the capable business man. A few years older than Chang, he was of a more impetuous and less well-controlled nature, so that the elder man would look up to the younger, hoping in time to gain the maturer gifts of the serious youth. Chang, on the other hand, envied the fearless attitude adopted by Kwo where wrong or injustice required reproof. The companion-

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ship of these two resulted in a constant provocation of each other to good works.

Our most ignorant pupil was a clever woman whose husband had but recently renounced his idols. He brought her riding in from the farm one Sunday morning to see the foreign women. Presently, with characteristic swift decision, she sent him back home alone, saying: 'I am going to have a week's Bible-study here. Bring the donkey with my week's provisions next Sunday, and then see if I want to go home or stay longer!' Her intercourse with Christian women was so successful that she stayed on to the fourth week of the class, taking meanwhile her definite stand as a Christian. A few days before the session ended, she was sent for in a hurry, her father-in-law having been suddenly taken dangerously ill. He died as she entered the house, and there were, of course, many neighbours round who said: 'See now! what trouble she has brought on her people by becoming a Christian!' Nothing daunted, however, she strengthened her husband's hands to demand a Christian funeral, and also to refrain from the observance of any heathen rites, whose plain object is to protect the living from demons, these demons having evidently already gained an entrance into the house, the death of one member of the family being obviously the result. This couple subsequently proved entirely steadfast.

The routine of the students' day was as follows. The first gong sounded each morning at sunrise, and an hour later the whole household assembled for family prayers, which were of a brief but very happy character. These were followed by breakfast, and at 9 a.m. the teacher entered the class-room, where all were assembled. For the next half-hour community singing was unrestrained, and occasion was afforded for the free expression of that invading sense of joy which, in truth, is the heritage of 'the Church militant here in earth,' but which is far too often extinguished by the conventionalities of Western Christianity. The joyous abandon of spirit naturally affected the neighbourhood, and a crowd always assembled in the playground below to hear the Christians sing. Dispensary patients would come early in order not to miss it, and a band of ragged urchins became so familiar with our songs as to swell the chorus from outside. Fear had hitherto dominated these souls—fear of death, of demons, of ill-luck, of disaster; of torments, too, in the After World, with its relentless wheel of requital. In the joy of their new-found liberty, small wonder that they sang!

Bible-study was in progress until midday, and by 2 p.m. every student was once more in his place preparing for the next day's question-hour. At 3 p.m. graded classes were held, and were followed by a lecture on hygiene, conducted by Dr. Kao. The sight of the merry group of children who gathered to our singing class had also decided us to hold a Children's Service, consequently every evening one of the students patrolled the streets beating a gong, from which trip he returned followed, like the Pied Piper, by a crowd of small people, skipping, jumping, and dancing, and whose enjoyment of the next delightful hour knew no bounds.

In this way the early summer came and went, bringing the sultry June days when the class-room throbbed with heat, and the evening dusk was sibilant with the shrill hum of mosquitoes, which drove us back from the cooler but insect-haunted courtyard into the stifling house again.

The sight of the distant snow-capped ranges, however, now held a promise of good things to come, for it was

000 arranged that we should spend July among them under canvas, in Tibetan territory.

CHAPTER IX

A SPRING CAMPAIGN

778 MARCO POLO wrote of the city of Kanchow, where he made long residence, and once held office as Governor, as the 'city which holds more gods than men.' This local saying is still constantly on the lips of its inhabitants, who take great pride in the fact that its temples and shrines are so numerous as never to have been accurately numbered.

133 The town is beautifully placed and abundantly
285 watered. It contains several lakes, which being overgrown with reeds supply material for an important mat-plaiting industry. Besides these larger expanses of water, there are a number of ponds fed by underground springs, dependent upon the melting snow from the Tibetan mountains. In these ponds the water rises and falls in a most unexpected way, so that sometimes their banks are surrounded by children fishing, while at others they become the highway of city traffic. The streets are bordered with fine poplar, acacia, and willow trees, which flourish splendidly, throwing their roots deep into the hidden sources.

353 As one would expect, the people are in all things superstitious and religious. All the wealthy homes have a private shrine, which is often a handsome hall, where the ancestral tablets are preserved, and where
788 incense is burned to the family idols. At sunset each day the sound of bells rises on every side, as the woman of each household touches the rope which sets in motion

a carillon of nine bells, hanging over the shrine. Simultaneously 788
one catches the monotonous tone of a hollow,
wooden drum, shaped like a crab, the beating of which
declares, in triple rhythm, that the ultimate issue of
earth, matter, and even life itself, is VOID.

'Earth is void! All is void! I am void!' This is
the message of the drum to every human heart in that
city of unnumbered gods.

The most rigorous asceticism rules the lives of many 262
Kanchow women. Not content with being under a 785
vegetarian vow, as is usually understood, they so fear
any subtle indulgence of the appetite, that even onions,
garlic, vinegar and red pepper, the necessary condiments
to flavour the insipid dough-string diet, are
eschewed. During the spring months almost each day 796
sees the recurrence of some festival, which draws the
crowds alternately to each temple in the neighbourhood.
Theatrical troops move from fair to fair, repeating their [536]
performances to the never-failing concourse of village
people, whose bullock-carts are parked in a wide semicircle
facing the stage, and in which the women sit the
whole day long exposed to the heat of the sun. Most of 796
the younger women and girls adorn themselves for the 302
occasion with paint and powder, until the face is converted
into an expressionless mask. Their hair is
beautifully dressed and decorated with artificial flowers.
Most of the small children are stamped on the forehead,
nose, and chin with minute geometrical patterns,
traced in red circles.

Just out of earshot of the stage, the food-vendors 796
pitch their stalls, where cooked eatables of all descriptions 265
are on sale. Pork fried and stewed in a thick
gravy, is served up in small saucers and eaten with
chopsticks, as also fried meat-dumplings, garnished
with vinegar and red pepper. A large mould of

796 steamed rice containing the fruit of the jujube tree is
265 popular, and dried apricots, macerated in water, are in demand as a cooling drink. Not far off are long tables sheltered by an awning, where men will sit for hours sipping tea and playing cards.

796 Within the temple buildings[1] the idols are dressed up in
782 gay silks, and each family on arrival presents itself at the various shrines to make obeisance, and burn incense. Thin sheets of yellow paper, on which are inscribed petitions to the gods, are lighted at the shrine lamp, waved in the air, and wafted upwards, the manner and height of ascent indicating the favour or displeasure of
785 the deities. Some of the older women, who have
796 practised asceticism for a lifetime and are prepared for any self-abnegation so that they may in the next incarnation obtain a more auspicious rebirth, perform elaborate rituals with touching devotion.

796 On such a fête-day all the temple treasures and silken
236 embroideries are on view, as also magnificent peacock-feather screens and umbrellas. The din of voices from vendors and visitors is completely overwhelmed when once the theatrical musicians commence their performance. Cymbals, pipes, and drums sound their loudest, while above them soars the shrill falsetto voice of the stage managers, announcing the details of the performance.

351 The temple grounds are beautifully kept. The
796 fragrant tree-peony opens its blossoms when the peach and pear trees drop their petals, and all through the summer months a succession of beautiful flowers decorates the fancy landscapes of the temple gardens, miniature lakes and bridges supplying a foreground to sacred mountains arranged on the same small scale.
796 The whole scene, from the turquoise sky, the snow-clad mountain ranges and the gorgeous profusion of flowers,

[1] [of Kanchow on Festival Days--Analyst]

to the embroidered satin banners and brilliant clothes 796 of the crowd, forms a feast of riotous colour which is a delight to the eye.

Where such crowds of men and women congregate, 800 the missionary cannot afford to be absent, and our whole Christian community spent some strenuous days in sewing together a large tent capable of holding about 300 people, which would afford us a vantage-ground at the fairs which now were going to be visited. The first occasion for its use was in the town of Shantan, two marches distant from Kanchow, when all studies were suspended to enable a band of eighteen students to accompany us. Under Dr. Kao's superintendence, four men went ahead, and secured an empty courtyard for our accommodation, being also instructed to display Christian posters wherever possible.

The preparations for such a campaign necessitated considerable forethought. The only sleeping accommodation supplied in inns or hired houses is a bare mud sleeping-platform in an empty room, therefore each member of the party must take a wadded quilt in which to wrap at night, and serving as both mattress and coverlet. A couple of iron pots, large enough to serve the whole company with boiled rice or macaroni, must also be supplied, and each member of the preaching-band carried his own bowl and chopsticks. The tent ropes and pegs were placed at the bottom of the cart, and 2000 lbs. weight was made up with bags of rice, flour, and the preachers' ammunition in the form of the Christian literature as supplied by the Bible and Religious Tract Societies. On all these trips, leaders and students, whether foreign or Chinese, ate and shared alike.

The clean white tent, flying attractive flags and decorated with bright Scripture posters, was a gay and

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striking object in the fair enclosure, and from the first moment when the strains of the baby-organ and the sound of hymn-singing were heard, a crowd of spectators poured in. For four days the preaching, singing, and book-selling continued uninterruptedly, nor could the tent, spacious though it was, hold the people who flocked to hear and to see the strange sight.

Brown-bearded Moslems and turbaned Turkis stood in the crowd shoulder to shoulder with Tibetans and flat-featured Mongols, to each one of whom we were able to supply the Scriptures in his own tongue, for though these border tribes all speak and understand Chinese, they are unable to read the written language. Once a couple of Siberian youths, whose business was in the Tibetan skin-trade, joined the throng, and they also went away possessors of a copy of the Russian New Testament.

The fatigue entailed by such an expedition is considerable. From dawn the whole community was astir, and meals were then prepared under such conditions as to allow for no tempting of the appetite. At breakfast each one was served with a bowl of rice and a small saucer of pickled turnip ; the midday meal was dough-strings boiled with cabbage ; and before we went to bed, a drink of rice-water was supplied. The June heat under canvas was intense, nor could we call a halt so long as we had willing listeners. Nights were crowded and disturbed, as the season described in the Chinese calendar as ' excited insects ' was now at its height.

Towards evening our courtyard was filled with young Moslem recruits from the military camp near by, who came to hear our singing and to enjoy Dr. Kao's free and easy talks on matters religious. We taught them many hymns, and none proved more popular than ' Onward Christian Soldiers,' in which they eagerly took part, shouting lustily. With the last of the daylight there came always the Muezzin's call to prayer from the Mosque, and our soldier-band vanished in response to the voice of authority.

Two incidents in connection with the Shantan expedition will never be forgotten.

It was the last day of the fair, the tent was struck, and we were wandering in the late afternoon through some of the temple buildings. The idol in whose honour the festival had been held still wore his gala costume, and the furniture of his wardrobe was still on view—the bedding, the changes of clothing, his wash-hand basin, and his mirror—a pitiably childish display. Around him sat other gods, his hideous attendants or fellow-deities, who grinned, threatened, leered, ogled or smirked, looking doubly frightful in the half light. But at his feet a group of men were gathered, listening so intently to one of their number reading aloud that they were wholly unconscious of our presence ; and what he read was the story of the Prodigal Son from the Gospel of St. Luke.

The next day we left Shantan, and, as is our habit, we walked ahead of our carts for the first few miles in order that we might secure at least some quiet and privacy. Being weary we sat down at the edge of a field in which the opium poppies were in full bloom—an opal-tinted expanse, washed with exquisite, soft, silvery lights. A few minutes later a Turkestan Moslem appeared, riding his donkey, and carrying in his hand a sheaf of Christian booklets. Dismounting, he approached us saying: 'I saw you in the tent yesterday when I bought these tracts. You are tired ; perhaps you have no money to hire a donkey in order to get home. I should like you, therefore, to use mine ; and you might take it each in turn to ride, for I also am returning to Kanchow, and

000 the sixty miles are far too long a journey for you to walk.'

CHAPTER X

A TIBETAN LAMASERY

513 THE Kanchow oasis reaches to the very foot of the Tibetan hills, and of all the North-Western towns which we visited, this city is the one most frequented by Tibetan travellers. We constantly met them strolling about the streets, or bartering their gold, silver, peacock-feathers and skins for the necessary grain which their nomadic life, as well as the climatic conditions, make it impossible for them to produce. The Christian community was deeply interested in these people, the more so since a recent visit to a Lamasery, where some of them had been hospitably entertained. It was therefore decided that a band of us should spend some time at the Kang Lung Lamasery, on the occasion of their yearly temple dances.

491 The first stage of the three days' journey was done by cart, and brought us to a large farmstead owned by a Christian man, who was making arrangements to supply us with sufficient mules, horses, and donkeys to carry us and our goods over the mountain pass. We were a party of twelve, and carried the tent in which we were to sleep, a folding-organ, a load of books, and a good supply of rice and flour. Five miles outside Kanchow is a wide and treacherous river, difficult to cross in the summer when snows are rapidly melting, and when thunderstorms in the mountains are frequent. Experienced men watch the river, and word was brought to us on the morning of our departure, that the waters

were too high to permit of a safe crossing before midday. 491
The sun was therefore high in the heavens before we started, and we reached the bank still uncertain as to whether we might not be obliged to return home and come back again the next day.

The water was very high, and divided itself into ten separate channels, some wide and fairly shallow, others narrow and deep, so that the furthest bank was half a mile distant. It was a critical moment when the mules and carts plunged into the muddy, roaring, tumultuous stream, in which large stones were swirled round and round like pebbles, by the force of the current. Only by long experience does a man learn how to keep his head. He must know, as the Chinese express it, 'how to look at water,' and how to restrain his eye from being drawn off by the rushing eddies from that distant bank which seems so far away. Happily, animals have this gift by nature, and keep cool and quiet, even when the driver may have temporarily lost his bearings. Bullocks are the most reliable under these circumstances, for they at once take to swimming when their footing fails.

We were more than an hour fording, and as we approached the furthest bank, the shaft-mule of our cart stumbled badly, so that for a moment we thought we were going to be swept away. A shout went up from the men on the bank as they prepared to plunge in to our rescue, whereupon the mules, realising the danger, recovered themselves with a tremendous effort, and promptly drew us into shallow water.

It was already dark when we reached the house 574
where we were expected. The fierce dogs were chained, the other animals had been fed, and the sheep folded so that the farmer's brief leisure hour had come. We were met at the door by the whole family, who emerged

574 to greet and welcome us. Rooms had been swept and got ready, and we were immediately served with bowls of hot, slightly salted milk, and fried doughnuts. Willing hands relieved our tired drivers of the work of feeding and stabling the mules, and within an hour we sat down to an abundant evening meal of the best food procurable. A sheep had been killed in view of our arrival, so there was meat and vegetables, with hot steamed bread. The kindness we received in this home is but typical of the grace of hospitality as understood by the Chinese, and such as has ever been extended to us on innumerable occasions by rich and poor alike.

Before dawn the farmyard was noisy with the braying of many small donkeys, hired and borrowed from neighbouring farms for our use. All our baggage was transferred to the pack-saddles, and shortly after sunrise we started to ride across the burning sands of the plain, towards the shady ravine, the entrance to which we could only just discern in the blue hills ahead.

471 The whole of the day was spent in following a narrow, uphill path through the gorge, where we crossed and recrossed a brawling mountain torrent. About mid-day we passed the watch-tower marking the frontier, and then knew ourselves to be actually on Tibetan soil.

OC? By early evening we called a halt, and pitched the tent on a grassy plot near a hut, which was the only human habitation we came upon. In it lived one old man, who cultivated a tiny garden, and whose house supplied the only possible shelter to the traveller over-taken by a blizzard. A large saucepan was filled from the stream, and a meal of boiled rice, this time without any accompaniment of pickles, was cooked over the camp fire, and round it we hungrily gathered, each

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A Tibetan Obo.
A pile of stones each with a number of poles bearing prayer flags.
To face page 50.

[Facing p. 50]

600 with bowl and chopsticks. Before we had finished eating, however, a mountain storm gathered and the rain fell, while a violent gust of wind laid the tent flat on the ground. The women of the party then decided to creep into a beehive-dwelling near by (used by the hut-keeper for storing hay), even in spite of the warnings that it was likely to be a refuge for snakes, but which scare fortunately never materialised, so that all night they slept in peace.

It was late afternoon on the next day when we at last came out of the long ravine into a sunny, grassy valley, carpeted with blue iris, edelweiss and gentians. In the distance lay the low buildings of the Lamasery, and by the roadside stood the white Chorten, an elegant monument with a slender spire, the mere passing of which brings good luck to the traveller. As the wind blew down the valley, it fluttered innumerable prayer-flags, and swayed the boughs of the trees from which the prayer-bones, inscribed with petitions, hung and rattled. In the stream flowing down the centre of the valley revolved a beautifully carved prayer-wheel, before which every passing Tibetan would without fail dismount and make obeisance. The hill-slopes here were densely wooded with fir trees, under which the ground was carpeted with cyclamem-coloured orchids and golden moss, while the bushes were overgrown with yellow and also black flowered clematis.

Our arrival was the signal for a stampede from the Lamasery, and we were now soon surrounded by a crowd of red-robed lamas and Living Buddhas. Willing and skilful hands helped with the erection of the large tent on a suitable site, between a bubbling stream where we could take our water, and the pine forest which would supply us with wood for the camp fire. A few minutes later, a band of Tibetan women came striding over the grass, and daringly crossed the river on a pine-trunk bridge. Their interest in us was extreme, and with easy familiarity they fingered our hair, examined our hands, and tried on our stitched-cotton hats. The Kang Lung women themselves wore high, white, felt hats, surmounted by a jaunty tassel. Their dresses were gaudy in the extreme, but their feet were thrust into clumsy top-boots. Adornment was supplied by an elaborate head-dress, falling from the nape of the neck to the knees, and which is always beautifully embroidered with coral beads and plaques of white sea-shells, relieved by ornaments of turquoise and jade.

We found no difficulty whatever in meeting them on a footing of free and spontaneous camaraderie, and instinctively we completely put on one side the stiffness of Chinese etiquette, abandoning ourselves to merry laughter with our new-made friends. The discovery of a wrist-watch, worn by one of the party, caused intense delight, and the veracity of the information that its face could be seen in the night was immediately tested by the clever erection of a dark-room, made by the lamas, who sat in a circle and spread their red shawls above their heads. Cries of joy came from the group as they announced the success of the experiment, and then each one in turn was admitted to the peep-show. This wonderful news being immediately reported to the Lamasery, the Living Buddha-in-Charge dispatched a messenger, helter-skelter, to secure the loan of the watch till the morning.

There were in residence in Kang Lung seven Living Buddhas, the chief of whom had reached his seventh reincarnation. These Living Buddhas are believed to be the spiritual sons of Celestial Beings, who, in order to help mankind, themselves voluntarily remain outside

Nirvana, from whence, having once passed in, it is impossible to reappear on this earth. Owing to their compassion for mankind, these Celestial Beings produce spiritual sons, that through them an opportunity may be given to all men to escape from the pains and terrors of subjection to recurrent transmigrations. The eighth Living Buddha belonging to this Lamasery had recently died, and the lamas were still searching for an infant who, being born at the moment of his death, was made the recipient of his departing spirit. About seventy lamas made their home in the monastery of Kang Lung, some of them being mere children, the religious system of Tibet demanding that each family shall devote one son to the temple service ; for in this land religious claims, whether upon life or goods, are never questioned for an instant by this absolutely priest-ridden people.

CHAPTER XI

MASQUERADE-DANCING

As the days went by, bands of Tibetan women came galloping on their horses at full speed along the narrow, precipitous paths which skirted the grassy hillsides far overhead, gathering for the approaching festival.

The Tibetans are matchless horsemen, and the feats performed by the women are in no wise behind those of their menfolk. Not only girls will start off, bridle in hand, in chase of a runaway horse, but a grandmother of seventy will assist in heading off the excited steed, on whose bare back when brought to a standstill she will be the first to leap, while her daughter adjusts the bridle.

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Each rider brings some present in kind, such as meat, butter, cream, or granulated cheese, as an offering to the Lamasery. The presentation is made by laying on the outstretched hands of the priest a length of cotton material, or a blue silk *khada* (a scarf into the fabric of which is woven the figure of the Buddha), and together with this the offering is made. In exchange, the Living Buddha puts on his robes of office, and surrounded by his acolytes walks in procession to the temple, where he recites liturgies in favour of his devotees.

On the morning of the sixteenth day of the sixth moon, we were awakened soon after midnight, by a hellish blast from the temple heralds, who stood on a high balcony, blowing instruments ten foot in length, from which a hoarse, prolonged groan was produced. Throughout the day this call was the prelude to each separate ritual, which included the procession of the priests to the court of a Living Buddha, and its return with him to the temple grounds.

By 9 a.m. the grassy enclosures of the Lamasery were crowded with worshippers, collected for the great event of the day, which was the masquerade-dancing by the priests. From all sides processions arrived, escorting the Resident and the Visiting Living Buddhas to their seats of honour. In each case they were preceded by attendants carrying a yellow satin umbrella. Finally, the greatest of them all made his appearance, dressed in yellow damask silk, and wearing a head dress shaped like an immense cockscomb. On his arrival the whole congregation bowed to the ground before him, and the more earnest pilgrims collected the dust of the earth on which his foot had pressed, in order to carry it away and so bring luck to their homes, flocks, and herds. At a given signal the great temple-doors were flung open, and two grotesque figures appeared on the platform, in harlequin dresses surmounted by death's-head masks. With light bounds they skipped and jumped from side to side in rhythmic precision. In a few minutes they were replaced by couples representing the various protective deities of the cattle, flocks, crops and home, and the worship of the forces controlling fecundity was plainly suggested in every dance by movements, gestures, and subtle allusions. The sacred bird of prey, represented by a vulture-headed dancer, received a great ovation, for on his good services depends the happiness of the departed individual, whose corpse, having been placed on the mountain side, if speedily picked clean by this scavenger, will be spared prolonged torment in hell. The effigy of a dead body having been laid upon the grass, the vulture-dancer, after hovering over it with delighted movements, made a sudden pounce, and piercing it with a small dagger, left a gaping wound from which blood spouted out. Near the close of the performance the dance of the God and Goddess of Thunder commenced. The midday sun was at its height in the deep blue sky as they advanced, dressed in magnificent embroidered satin robes, and wearing huge black masks with yawning mouths and protruding eyes. The character-dance was one of delicate, mincing steps with outstretched palms lifted to the sky. The music which accompanied this part of the performance was cleverly adapted to suggest the sound of hail, rain and wind, with occasional clashes from the cymbals as of a clap of thunder, followed by a long, shivering sibilance like that of a storm of rain among trees. Round and round the enclosure they pirouetted, curtsied and bent towards the four corners of the earth. And then, strangely enough, as the cymbals clashed forth a mock peal, they were answered from the heavens above by a tremendous crash of real thunder,

[FACING p. 56]

OOD

Tibetan Women.

"Their dresses were gaudy in the extreme, embroidered with coral beads and white sea shells."

A Tibetan Lama.

"Only one who is the Giver of Life Eternal can overcome this darkness."

To face page 56.

reverberating from range to range of the surrounding hills; the heavens were suddenly darkened, flashes of lightning darted, while rain and hail fell in a deluge on the prostrate bodies of the worshippers. In a few minutes all was over, and the sun shone out again on the figure of the Living Buddha seated on his throne, in his immobility scarcely distinguishable from the idols round him, but whose eyes, however, had meanwhile been busily scanning the groups of young women near. The dance was barely over before his acolytes, without the slightest concealment, were busy among the girls, and choosing here and there among them such as seemed goodliest, led them to his court, there to do the pleasure of the Buddha Incarnate.

The afternoon ceremony took the form of a propitiatory rite, the Chief Lamas sitting in semicircle round a brazier, whose flames were continually fed with oiled butter. Each one wore a diadem, in shape something like a triple crown, with a heavy black silk fringe concealing the forehead. The priestly robes were very magnificent, and each hierophant held a bell in his right and a rattle in his left hand. As the liturgies proceeded, a gradual intensifying of frenzied fervour set in. The fire, fed afresh with liquid streams of butter, leaped up, devouring the offerings of wheat and other grains thrown into it by handfuls, together with chips of wood, fodder, and loveliest Iceland poppies. Then did the flames crackle merrily, the bells rang, the rattles were shaken, the cymbals clashed and clanged, and the fumes of the incense rose in a dense, aromatic cloud, wrapping the whole congregation in its coiling folds.

Buddhism adopts many guises, but in watching these rituals one felt in the presence of very old and very evil influences. From the faces of most of the child lamas

000 all boyishness had fled, leaving only lack-lustre eyes and a dull apathy, while on the features of the greater number of the older men, nameless, convulsive passions had left their hideous traces, showing unmistakably the disintegrating nature of the Power at work. In a country where personal cleanliness is practically impossible during nearly three quarters of the year owing to climatic causes ; where women are the common property of a plurality of possessors ; where one sixth of the population is segregated in a so-called celibacy given over to idleness, and where such family life as exists is destitute of the very rudiments of decency or sanitation, nothing short of the deliverance of the individual—body, soul, and spirit—from the grasp of this stultifying Power can effect anything radical. We are dealing here with a fundamental problem of human existence, for which there is but one Master-Key. Only One, Who is the Giver of Life Eternal, can overcome this darkness.

When the worshippers left the temple grounds they trooped to our tent, where a religious service of a very different character awaited them, and they were delighted by the cheerful strains of the hymn-singing, the little organ, and the simple, picturesque preaching and apt illustrations of the Chinese Evangelist. From this hour the tent became the centre of social intercourse, and our lean larder also was replenished by the generous gifts of food brought in by our visitors. True, the butter was rancid and full of yak's hairs, the cream was sour, and the cheese so strong that it had to be kept outside, but our provisions were running low, and the open-air life in the bracing air engendered a keen appetite which itself supplied a relish to everything. We ate the Tibetan food, and were glad of it !

In Tibet the population is divided into but two

100 distinct classes—the lamas, and the laity. These latter are a wholly uneducated, spontaneous, and trustful people. Many of them would sit with us for hours, and would return again and again, bringing small offerings which they exchanged for coloured pictures. The layman is accustomed undeviatingly to shelve all responsibility in matters deemed spiritual on to the shoulders of the priest, who is paid and kept solely for this purpose, with the result that the lamas' whole existence being dependent upon the populace, it is to his advantage that ignorance and gross superstition should be maintained. Yet even among the lamas some seem to have aspirations after better things. There is one Living Buddha who stands out in contrast with all his fellows. He made a pretext to visit our tent, where he sat, spellbound, listening to the story of the Prodigal Son.

'The forgiveness of that young man by his father is a thing I can understand,' he said; 'but what of the burden of sin of previous lives, which binds us to the Wheel of Life?' 'The Lord Jesus Christ is the Door *out* from all the past, as well as being the Entrance *into* a new and an Eternal Life,' was our answer. He listened thoughtfully, and when he left accepted a copy of the New Testament in Tibetan, which he carefully hid in the folds of his red shawl.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE VILLAGES

212 On our return to Kanchow we found the wheat-
871 harvest almost over, and the season now suitable for
797 conducting classes in village centres. These were very

largely attended, as many as eighty men and women 212
registering in one locality. The majority were illiterate. 871
We therefore considered it best to insist on all students 797
becoming first of all proficient in the Government Phonetic Script, by means of which system an illiterate can be taught to read in twenty days. During the three years we spent in Kansu, five hundred and twenty-three pupils learnt this Script in our classes.

The villages of Kansu are often exceedingly poor, and 312
in one of the places we visited the people had sunk so 511
low as to be threatened with extinction by famine. A 241
few miles away from this village the wide Heh ho—Black River—rushes out of a mountain gorge, its waters being then turned into the large irrigation-canals which convey them to the various districts. Quarrels, resulting in lawsuits between the principal villages, had led [578]
to the loss of their rights on the river by this settlement. For three years no water had been allowed to come that way, and as rain is so scarce in North-West Kansu no farming can be done without irrigation. As deep [733]
poverty seized these unfortunate people, opium-smoking became their only possible luxury, and they were soon plunged in unspeakable degradation. Dr. Kao, with a band of young Christian men, hearing of their miserable condition, paid them a visit. He found their irrigation-canal having been dry for three years was now completely choked with all kinds of débris. Apathy had fallen on the village elders, and the whole situation appeared hopeless. A meeting was convened, to which all the men came, and was opened and addressed by Dr. Kao. He told them of the love of God for each one of them, and of the saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ to free them from even the craving for opium. 'You must repent, pray, and work,' he said. 'We will now together acknowledge

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your sins to God, and ask Him to incline the heart of the Mandarin to restore the water to this district. Meanwhile, let everyone of you fetch his own spade, and supply my men and myself with tools, and we will see what can be done by clearing the canal in preparation for the water for which we have just been praying.' In an hour's time the preacher and men, having thrown off their coats, were digging hard, and repairing the channel. Two days later, Dr. Kao received a summons from the Civil Magistrate of Kanchow, requiring his medical assistance. Before he left the Yamen, the Mandarin said: 'What is this I hear about you and your men, digging out an irrigation-canal at Hehcheng—Black City? I really think something ought to be done for those people over there; as soon as I am rid of this illness, I will enquire into the matter.'

A few days later the water which so long had been withheld poured down the canal, and a new life began for the inhabitants of Black City.

On the occasion of our visit, they had just reaped their first harvest, and some were eating wheaten-bread for the first time in two years. Their homes were almost denuded of the necessities of existence. When we entered many of the barest farms, the women dared not descend from the *kang* to receive us, their rags only covering their nakedness while sitting huddled together, and girls of eleven years of age went about entirely unclothed. Yet even in this poverty-stricken place gifts of food were brought us daily—a few eggs; a bowl of green wheat steamed till the grains burst; a handful of garlic picked wild in the fields, or a bunch of the desert-grown, edible plant (Nostoc commune flagelliforme) known as 'hair-grass,' from its likeness to black human hair;—all these things and many others were presented to us in token of friendship and goodwill.

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At length, with the close of all the village classes, came the day in Kanchow when the rite of baptism was administered to fifty men and women. Outside the North Gate of the city, a clear stream runs between grassy banks. Here we pitched the great tent and held the service. The open-air meeting began with singing, followed by a few words of exhortation to the catechumens, and of explanation to the small collection of onlookers. This was followed by the descent into the water, where each in turn was required to answer the question: 'Dost thou believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?' An almost breathless silence fell on the crowd as each made his or her confession of faith, and was then immersed, 'in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Very courageously and reverently the women, dressed in their white baptismal-robes, entered the water, under the eyes of a crowd so subdued by the arresting solemnity of the occasion, as to refrain from even the suggestion of levity.

Meanwhile, the formation of the Pioneer Band was in progress, for the hottest weather would soon be over, when it would become possible for a landowner to make his arrangements by which he and his wife would not be required on the farm until the next sowing season. Finally, a list of thirty names was drawn up, and the date of departure for Suchow fixed, this city being determined on as the base of the campaign.

Dr. Kao, with a few leaders and ourselves, were leaving earlier than the remainder of the party, as premises had to be secured and arrangements made on the spot for receiving so large a number. Our own immediate household included an old and faithful servant, who had come with us all the way from Shansi, having already served us there for over ten years. His was a simple nature, and having made our interests his own, he guarded us and our belongings with uncompromising fidelity. In his case the journeys were generally undertaken balanced on the top of a hired cart, packed with the heavier luggage, and woe-betide the carter who might attempt to filch a rope, a nail, or length of string which belonged to us! As is the habit of old retainers, every article of household use was referred to by him as 'ours,' and in his dealings with the younger servants he did not hesitate to say: 'If your work is not properly done *We* intend to dismiss you, and engage someone else!'

We three Missionaries travelled in a conveyance known in North China as a 'Peking cart,' which, in addition to our persons, could hold no more than our bedding, one valise, and a food-box. This cart was drawn by a large, white shaft-mule, answering to the name of 'Lolly,' together with a beautiful little brown mule, 'Molly,' who also came from Shansi with us. Our second servant acted as driver. This young man was twenty-three years of age, and five years previously had run away from his father's house on account of ill-treatment by a stepmother. Although his family were in good circumstances, and owned many acres of land, he left home without any cash in his pocket, and thus had known great hardship and hunger while making his way West, until he reached Kanchow, where he found permanent employment in a coal-mine. His work was to shoulder the sacks of coal, filled by the miners, and then carry them to the pit-mouth. It was arduous toil and never ceasing, for as there was no Sunday break, it lasted daily from dawn to dark. His name was 'Welcome Home,' and had been given him at his birth during his father's absence on a long journey, his mother taking this means of expressing pleasure at the thought of her husband's return. Down in the coal-mine was a man who had attended one of our village classes, and there had learnt the Phonetic Script. Young 'Welcome Home's' greatest ambition was to secure some degree of education, and after the work of the day was done, he induced his friend to teach him how to use this wonderful, easy method of reading. The instruction was given by means of a copy of one of the Gospels, and before long the young man became deeply impressed by the story they read together. He took a day's holiday, walked to Kanchow, where he attended his first Christian service, and there met Dr. Kao, of whom he begged permission to attend the elementary classes for enquirers. Dr. Kao's recollections of his own struggles during the period of his youth are so vivid, that he can never bring himself to refuse a helping hand to any young man who is ready to work. He admitted the boy to the Mission Compound on condition that he would help in the kitchen, in exchange for his keep. 'Welcome Home's' progress was remarkable, and he proved to be so satisfactory, both as pupil and worker, that within a few weeks we took him on as our personal servant, and the coal-pit knew him no more. The fellow-members of his class at once supplied him with a necessary suit of clothes, his own being in rags, and he now became a very useful member of our band. These two attendants remained with us all through our period in Kansu, and made a most valuable contribution to the work of Evangelism in which we were engaged, by their fidelity and reliability. It lies largely in the hands of the missionary's servant to make or mar the work of his employer, for it is from him that all enquiries, as to the personal character and object of the said missionary, are made, while the reputation given by these men is never questioned. In

000 these two faithful friends we had also two earnest
Evangelists, who never lost an opportunity of recommending the Good News which we were there to proclaim.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CITY OF TEMPLES

241 When not busy with village classes we made an
opportunity to see the sights of Kanchow, which is a
[7/2] very remarkable town. The city wall is three miles in
length, and from it a fine view of the well-irrigated,
fertile land around can be obtained. This was sown
with wheat, barley, millet, and more especially with
rice, for which this district is famous, as well as with the
opium poppy, and also peas and beans for animal
fodder. Nearer the town were numerous fruit-orchards
—pears, apricots, and apples—with vineyards which
supply the market with both black and white grapes.
[312] The amount of water which floods this district from the
melting snows is so great that many of the country
roads become shallow rivers during the summer months.
361 Looking down into the city from the wall, one's first
346 impression is the beauty of the reed-filled lakes, and the
number of splendid trees. From the midst of these the
342 gay, glazed-tiled roofs of numerous temples appear, and
a high pagoda built in Indian style catches the eye, but
the dwelling-houses are low and insignificant. The
roofs are flat and made of mud, and the houses are all
very lightly built and obviously crooked, owing to the
boggy nature of the soil which does not allow of a sure
foundation. The largest temples and the Mission
Compound stand on the higher ground of the city,

which permits of a more solid structure than elsewhere. 361
The collapse of these mud dwelling-houses is frequent; 346
we ourselves were roused one morning by an ominous 342
thud, and ran out just in time to see Molly, with an injured air and covered with dust, led from the ruins of her stable which had fallen down around her.

Among the temples[1] none is so highly valued by the 346
citizens as the Hall of the Sleeping Buddha. The figure 778
is one hundred and twenty feet in length, about forty 532
feet high, and is firmly believed by the Kanchow populace to be the largest image of Buddha in the world. It is made of earth and plastered with a composition of lime and paper pulp. Entirely devoid of artistic merit, it is merely a colossal figure, reclining with the head resting on the right hand, and enormous, outstretched feet with huge, round toes of regular form. A gallery runs round the upper part of the hall from which a downward view can be obtained. The city also contains a Chorten (relic tomb) about one hundred and fifty feet high, which holds the remains of a noted Living Buddha who died in the locality. The Chorten is considered to symbolise the five elements into which the body is resolved at death—earth, water, fire, air, and ether.

In another temple is a brass horse and rider of great 346
antiquity. This statue is viewed with reverence, as it 778
is believed to have been miraculously conveyed to 532
Kanchow by a great flood of the Black River. Outside 776
this temple is a splendid, bubbling spring of water, called the Ih Chuan, and said to be the first spring of sweet water to the west of the Yellow River. It feeds a tank where sacred goldfish disport themselves, and has been venerated for centuries. Close to our own residence was the beautiful Temple of the Spacious Hills. We often walked there in the evening, when the

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T.J.G. E
[1] [at Kanchow -- Analyst]

346 flowery trees and shrubs, roses and peonies, made the
778 garden fragrant. The temple held a fine set of china
figures representing the Pa Hsien. These are the Eight
532 Genii, the men of the hills, who once lived on earth, but
776 now, free from the grosser claims of the flesh, still retain the capacity for such minor delights as strolling leisurely in beautiful surroundings, or even those of eating and drinking. When in the flesh, although they practised asceticism, it was not to such a degree as to secure complete etherisation. They are not immortal, but enjoy a prolonged and easeful life. The little figures look their best standing on the old lacquered table in the sombre shrine, and the gay gardens provide an appropriate setting to these unaspiring beings.

Above the porch was a fresco which showed—hanging in graceful attitude over a balcony rail—the form of the Kwan in—Goddess of Mercy—with an infant in her lap. The pose, coiffure, and background were so Western that it might have been a fresco in the porch of
[171] an Italian Church. This was not the only place in which we saw pictures which bore a distinct trace of Nestorian tradition and influence, and this is not surprising considering that in the thirteenth century, Marco Polo still found groups of Nestorian Christians, both in Kanchow and in Suchow.

792 Close by the Temple of the Spacious Hills was a quiet courtyard, where ten Buddhist nuns lived in community. They were all deficient, either physically or mentally, blind, deaf or short-witted. Their feet were unbound and their hair cropped. They were in receipt of a pension, and gave themselves up to reciting long liturgies. Their services were valued at funerals, where they intone prayers for the departed. We often called in and sat for an hour, and they loved to see our Scripture pictures, and listen to the Bible stories.

The population, as in all these cities of the North- 513
West, is largely composed of Chinese from distant 241
provinces who hold the main part of the trade in their 443
hands. The Kansu man is the agriculturalist, but each 426
village-centre offers scope for the trading capacity of a Honan or Shensi man, who opens a small shop in which he does a large business as grain-merchant and money-lender. The farmer values the services of this fellow-countryman, who helps him out of many difficulties, but hates the oppression of the Tungkan or Huei Huei—by which name the Chinese Moslem is known. The origin of the Huei Huei is disputable; they are a vigorous race of men, to whom the Chinese Government at one time made grants of land. They entrenched themselves in South Kansu, were responsible for the Mohammedan rebellion and massacres, and though quelled for a time they have so reasserted themselves as to now hold many of the important official positions in the North-West. Their regiments are feared by the local people, from whom they seize produce, grain, and animals, requiting them with personal violence if they dare to question the right of might.

An illustration of the high-handed dealings of the 000
Huei Huei is supplied by the incidents which brought one of our women students into the Christian circle. She, a young woman with one small child, was married to an elderly man, who was both an opium-smoker and a gambler. Their little home was in a courtyard which backed Dr. Kao's dispensary. Her husband, after losing all his money in a gamble with a Huei Huei, put her up as the stake, and lost. She came to know of this, and when her husband spoke of going away from home for a few days, knew at once that this was a prearranged plan for the Moslem to come and claim her. She had no redress nor court of appeal, so she

000 bought enough opium to kill herself, and kept it at hand for use when needs-be. A few nights later the Huei Huei appeared in her room, and informed her that she was his by right. Without a word she swallowed the opium, and then said: 'I shall soon be dead and you may do as you please with my body.' Meanwhile the neighbours, aware of what had happened, climbed on to the flat roof and shouted for Dr. Kao. He jumped out of bed, and seizing his medical bag, was soon over the roof. The woman was not yet unconscious, but when he wanted to give her treatment she said: 'Dr. Kao, it is useless for you to try and save me, for I shall cut my throat rather than consent to go with that man.' 'If you do as I tell you,' answered the Doctor, 'and trust me, I will protect you.' Then turning to the fierce, bearded bully he said: 'This woman is going to my wife this very night, and when you have anything to say to her you may come to me.' The Moslem slunk away and was seen no more, but the rage and hatred which Kao's uncompromising condemnation of evil stirred up in official and Moslem circles, burnt the fiercer, and vengeance on the Doctor was the more determined. The woman lived for months with Mrs. Kao, then having confessed her Christian faith, became one of the band of women who accompanied us to Suchow.

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Besides the Chinese and Moslem populations of Kanchow, there are most interesting traces to be found of aboriginal races. It is not infrequent to meet men, women and children with fair, reddish hair of a finer texture and more curly than that of the Chinese, and light eyes, not blue but fawn-colour. They intermarry with the local people, have no distinctive customs, and are only recognisable by the constant reversion to type.

000 Soon after our arrival in Kanchow, it was reported

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to us that the Panchan Lama would pass through the city on his way from Tibet to Peking. The whole town was decorated for his reception, and Officials, with regiments of Moslem soldiers, went out to meet him. He himself was escorted by a bodyguard of armed Tibetan warriors, and travelled in a cart upholstered in the same material as that of his own robe of yellow, brocaded satin. We were able to get a good view of him sitting cross-legged in the cart, and fingering his rosary whilst he looked round with interested eyes on the assembled crowds. The following day a message arrived from a famous Living Buddha, Hsia Fu Ye, of the Altai Mountains, who had just arrived, to find himself too late to pay his respects to his chief. He asked if he might borrow our cart and mules, which would enable him to overtake the great lama, and give him the required kowtow. We were glad to grant his request, for he was an old friend of Dr. Kao's, and forty-eight hours later he returned, his mission accomplished. He spent the evening with us, and as he is keenly interested in all matters of the soul, the conversation naturally centred around the Person of our Blessed Lord. He listened intently, and at each mention of the Name of Christ, he gravely bowed his head. The next morning he left us for the long journey back to his Mongolian Lamasery.

The Buddhist temples were during these days full of lamas, performing rites at the numerous shrines, and many of them came to the Mission House to sit and talk, and drink tea. One morning a tall, handsome young Tibetan walked in, and asked a direct question: 'Have you any use in your Church for a man such as myself?' We asked him what he knew of Christianity that he should make such an unusual enquiry. 'I live,' he said, 'very far from here, but I travelled down through Kang Lung recently, and stayed there with the lamas. They told me of your visit, and they are all reading the books you left with them.'

PART TWO

IN THE FAR NORTH-WEST

CHAPTER XIV

LEAVING KANCHOW

It was a soul-inspiring event for the Kanchow Church when its members gathered to escort their missionary delegates three miles outside the city, and to bid them God-speed on their way to Suchow, and the regions beyond. On one of the last days a very good meal was provided by the Church, to which all were invited, being pressed to take full advantage of this last opportunity of eating the familiar dishes, for according to the Chinese proverb :

> ' Stay at home and your joys are sure,
> Travel the road and your food is poor.'

The delays of the final departure seemed innumerable, and when the farewells had been said, we were still near the banks of the Black River, and the sun was already sinking. Six miles further on brought us to the first possible halting-place, and here we spent the night. On these missionary journeys we made a practice of travelling as slowly as possible, in order to secure every opportunity of intercourse with the lonely dwellers even in the most remote and unattractive hamlets, 000 through which the ordinary traveller is glad to pass quickly.

133 The aspect of the country was very different from
that which we had met south of Kanchow. On the
Tibetan side the snow-covered Richthofen Range came
closer and closer, while the Mongolian hills gradually
diminished in size until they became mere sand-dunes,
and then drifted off into the flat expanse of the Gobi
Desert. The style of the country presented a good deal
of variety, and lay in clearly defined sections running
[245] from north to south in narrow strips. Shaho, the first
town of importance, was on a fertile band, and lay in
the midst of orchards, in which the trees were then laden
with ripe pears. Leaving these one mile behind us, we
entered an area of loose sandhills, where we found it
necessary to descend from our carts to lighten the
weight for the animals. We plodded through the fine,
dry slopes with a delightful sense of illusion that just
136 over the horizon the sea must surely appear. A number
of small sand-coloured lizards sunned themselves by the
way; and raising their heads at our approach, they
then made off at a great pace pursued by the carter,
who derived much enjoyment from catching them by
the tail. Our part in the sport was to sing and whistle,
which immediately brought the little creatures to a
standstill, and kept them spellbound for as long as we
continued our tunes. About ten miles further on we
passed a clearly-defined line of swamp, through which
we approached the city of Fuyi. Here the water-
wagtails kept pace with the cart, and a beautiful
crocus-yellow-breasted variety flitted in and out of
the rushes.

[361] Fuyi was the smallest walled city we had seen, but
[712] stands surrounded by well-watered and prosperous
622 farmsteads, owned by wealthy families. The hand of a

capable and intelligent Mandarin was evidenced as soon as the gates were reached, for on the plastered walls appeared practical precepts regarding the duties of good citizenship, and a series of pictures illustrating the downward course of the gambler and opium-smoker. 622

We were desirous of calling at one of the large farms in the neighbourhood, as it was the home of a young man who had been received into the Pioneer Band. This student, who had graduated from a Government Normal College, was a member of one of the most affluent and influential families of Fuyi. On his way back from Lanchow, he had come to the Kanchow Mission House with a request that he might be supplied with necessary dressings, having lately undergone an operation in hospital. He presented a pathetic appearance, being thin, pale, and melancholy, and at first sight, as he stood fingering the books of the lending-library in the guest-room, we read in his face an appeal for the help which would satisfy a longing deeper than the needs of the body. With characteristic cordiality and genial words, Dr. Kao made the necessary introduction. 'This is Mr. Tu,' he said, 'who is coming to spend a few days with me. He has been ill, and I cannot allow him to remain at an inn.' Then turning to his visitor, he continued: 'These ladies will be passing through Fuyi in the autumn, and I hope they may call then and see your mother and wife.' A few days were sufficient to transform this sad youth into one whose whole being, spirit, soul, and body, was irradiated with a new life. He read the Scriptures as one who found great treasure; but he also shrank from the difficulties of the return home, when, as a matter of course, incense would be burnt, and he himself would be expected to give thanks to the family idols for protection on the journey. 600

596 The ancestral residence of the Tu family was typical
of many such in Kansu. In the midst of widespreading
609 fields an ancient walled citadel had been built, like an
old baronial castle. A heavy, wooden door guarded the numerous courtyards, in which a colony of over thirty people, covering four generations, made their home. There was no access here for the Missionary unless by
special invitation. Half a dozen Tibetan dogs guarded
596 the entrance, keeping all strangers and intruders at
609 bay. Within this fortress dwelt a family whose minds
231 were as strongly barricaded against new thought or
new light, as was their castle door against the unwelcome stranger. When the message had reached the mother that her son was accepting the hospitality of a Kanchow Christian doctor, who also gave him medical attendance, her mind was instantly filled with fears that misfortunes of every kind would follow this rash behaviour. Acting on the advice of her mother-in-law and senior relatives, a letter was at once dispatched urging him to return, even suggesting that if he delayed the consequences might be serious to his mother's health.

A visit from Dr. Kao did much to ally suspicion, so that when we accepted the invitation to call on Mrs. Tu we were politely received and hospitably entertained. She had not taken this step, however, without consulting with the senior members of the clan, who had promised to be there and to give her their support in the event of our coming. We approached the house by an avenue of poplar trees. In an adjoining field a flock of herons had alighted, and stood at attention in every attitude of angular grace. Mr. Tu and his elder brother came out to meet us, and escort us past the kennels, where fierce dogs tugged at their chains. In the outer court stood the camels lately brought down from the pasture, in preparation for their annual trip

to Peking, where local goods would be exchanged for 609
cheap Japanese merchandise. Many mules were feed- 596
ing in the spacious stables, and a flock of a thousand 231
sheep were spread over the fields around.

A crowd of about fifty women and children dressed in
their best came forward to meet us, and in a moment 609
the tense atmosphere of suspicion palpably cleared as 596
they discovered that we were dressed like ordinary Chinese women, and were also able to hold conversation with them in their own language. An aged dame, the most worldly-wise of the party, was deputed to sit at table with us, to report upon our manners. Her cordiality increased every moment on perceiving that we knew perfectly well when and how to respond to each gesture that the etiquette of well-bred Chinese society, of the last generation, demands. We were tactfully cross-questioned as to the reason of our being in China, and the old lady tried hard to elucidate the ulterior motives which had brought us so far from kith and kin! Amid many head-shakings, they all finally reached the decision that the desire for 'spiritual merit' was our ruling passion; and on this ground, understanding our motives, they gave us whole-hearted admiration. We realised, however, the force of the inexorable family decision, that neither the son, his young wife, nor any member of the circle, should be the *first* to break away from the age-long tradition of idolatrous domination and ancestral worship, which was the ruling factor of their family solidarity. Yet the young man ultimately proved himself to be immovable on the one vital point of loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ; and, strange to relate, when the decisive moment came, his timid girl-wife ranged herself on his side, declaring her determination to join her husband, and place herself, with him, under our instruction.

609 596 The mother's parting threat to her son, when he left the house, was expressed in these words : 'The day you join that Church you may order my coffin, for I will not live to endure such a disgrace.' His answer was : 'There is a way of life and a way of death. If you *must* choose the way of death, I shall mourn for you. But as for me, my path is that of Life.'

797 812 871 On our next visit to Fuyi we were the guests of the Mandarin for seventeen days, during which time, at his request, we gave instruction in Phonetic Script to both boys' and girls' schools. Although the town is small, the schools are important, and supply a number of students to the Provincial College at Lanchow. This visit afforded us the opportunity, under particularly happy conditions, to hold evangelistic services for children and for adults. The first Christian worship in Fuyi was led by Mr. Tu, whose name was in the mouth of every man of the neighbourhood. 'What *shall* we see next ? ' they said. 'Tu ru tao has joined the Christians ! '

CHAPTER XV

NEARING SUCHOW

244 THAT same evening we left Fuyi for the city of Kaotai, which is the next important centre between Suchow and Kanchow. The fertility of this district can be judged by the daily market, where splendid vegetables of every description are for sale. This was the melon season, and half-a-dozen varieties of excellent quality were displayed in abundance. In view of the lean days to come, we stocked ourselves well with them, as also with carrots, celery, potatoes, egg-plant, and, for the

first time, foreign onions, which were large and of a very 244
good quality. Homespun cotton materials were also [248
to be bought, as this district,[1] unlike many others, pro-
duces a very fair cotton crop, which the men spin, and 286]
weave by hand on primitive looms. Kaotai also
supplies a very superior kind of anthracite, which when 316
burnt in a brazier is practically smokeless, giving off
intense heat for hours; its fumes, however, are un-
pleasant to those unaccustomed to them.

From Kaotai there are two roads to Suchow, used 491
alternately according to the season of the year; we
took on this occasion the upper one following the foot
of the Richthofen Range, where, between the oases,
tracts of coarse gritty sand are found overlaid with
small black pebbles, which presented an excellent and
firm surface for our carts.

The first stage in this direction brought us to the 172
ruined city of Camel-Town, an ancient settlement,
dating from the time when North-West Kansu was
under the sway of great Mongolian chiefs. Tradition
has it that this was the centre from which King To-lo,
probably a ruler during the time of the Mongol sup-
remacy which terminated about the middle of the
fourteenth century, controlled his tribe.

This was the first of the large buried cities we had yet seen, and interested us greatly. The massive clay walls of the enclosure still stood, showing the extended area once inhabited, but now the only building not completely ruined was a temple, with a lean-to of one room, in which lived an old man and his wife. It was an isolated spot, bearing a bad name for brigandage, and no carter spends the night there willingly. We had arrived late in the afternoon, having started early in the morning, so we had declared our fixed determination to get a night's rest here at any price. While

[1] [Kaotai--Analyst]

172 wandering through the deserted temple-courts, where huge, grotesque, clay-images of gods loomed, we perceived, in the corner of a small shrine, two men fast asleep, with their heads pillowed on their bulging cash-bags. A few moments later, we saw these same individuals quietly remove the stones barricading a side door, through which they then slipped and vanished. The action seemed suspicious, for the honest traveller in China is always ready to exchange road-information with other passers-by. We therefore asked the old woman who they might be, but for answer she drew one of us by the sleeve into the recesses of her hovel, and then whispered: 'Nobody knows, and we dare not question them, but they have been hiding here for two days.'

233 Having explored the shadow-filled temple, we proceeded to visit the lonely guardians of a camel encampment, whose tents were pitched about a quarter of a mile distant, where the animals fed on the prickly herbage abundant in the neighbourhood. Seeing us coming, the drover called in his fierce dogs, who at a word slunk behind the tents. Round these the camel packs were symmetrically stacked in a semicircle, while the browsing camels themselves were to be seen outlined against the horizon.

000 The head-man now came forward, and to our surprise we found ourselves confronted by a Lanchow College graduate, the son of just such a wealthy house as that we had lately visited at Fuyi; and presently, over a cup of tea, a delightful hour followed of unconventional, human intercourse, not only with this intelligent, well-educated man, but also with the drovers, for China is a land where a real, though unconscious, democracy exists. When we rose to leave, our host gave the signal for rounding-up, and all the savage dogs then rushed

forth in full cry, driving each camel to its own load, which was promptly secured, to the accompaniment of groans and grunts from that morose animal.

As the disc of the sun fell behind the skyline the cavalcade moved off southwards; fainter and fainter came back the sound of the sonorous bells, and at last the long caravan disappeared into the dim, purple distance.

It is on the occasion of such an encounter that the missionary feels keenly how much he owes to the work of the Bible and Tract Societies. This scholarly man had been delighted to accept, not only well-bound and well-printed copies of the Gospels, but a whole sheaf of leaflets, each one of which presented some side of Christian truth in an intelligent and literary form. No experience in life affords a better opportunity for facing spiritual issues than does the enforced quiet of a long journey, for this student had already been fifty days travelling by night and resting by day, amid the vast silence and space of the desert, and many more such stages lay ahead, giving him time for deep, concentrated thought.

By means of that mysterious sixth sense the Chinese use for picking up secret information, our carter met us on our return to the temple with the news that a robbery was expected to-night in Camel-Town, and consequently we must forthwith depart. 'The mules are already harnessed,' he said. 'Those two men are up to mischief, and we must be clear of this place before dark!' Realising that all argument was useless, and that our fatigue must be overcome, we had to embark anew on a long night-stage, without the slightest chance of sleep being possible.

Three stages from Suchow, we passed a hamlet which takes its name from a salt lake lying about a mile

317 distant. We made a détour to visit this, and questioned a band of workmen we found on its border, raking the white crust into glittering mounds. They informed us that every year, in the month of April, the water wells up to its highest level, gradually retreating during the summer, and leaving behind the crystals, which are so clean and pure as to require no further process than that 312 of being exposed to the sun's rays. Strange to say, however, the spring of drinking-water used by the villagers is perfectly sweet.

651 The inhabitants of Salt Lake village possess the right to a certain tax on every cartload of salt exported, but 733 as usual opium has killed all initiative, and these unhappy people are reduced to an abject state of 342 poverty. The miserable houses, however, are constructed of very endurable material, the blocks being of sun-dried, bituminous clay dug from the borders of the lake, and which are much harder than the kiln-burnt bricks commonly used in Kansu.

624 It had been reported to us that a Christian Chinese couple resided here, the husband being the official recently appointed by the Chinese Government to receive the salt tax. This lady and gentleman hearing we were there, invited us to their house and we were cordially welcomed into a delightful Christian home. It was indeed pleasant to sit down at a well-served table, and to enjoy once again Christian fellowship and intercourse. These refined people were living under 437 conditions of the utmost isolation, where all food-supplies had to be brought from Kaotai, as it is impos-511 sible to grow any grain or vegetables; indeed, the neighbourhood produces no commodity of any description whatever except salt.

133 And now at length we finally touched the extreme southern border of our objective, and passed, without

any transition, from wastes of sand into a fertile zone, in which the city of Linshui stands. We arrived there 133 in the evening, and after supper strolled out through the quiet street to the canal which bordered the watered land. Here we sat on a bank and looked down on what 000 was to us a very beautiful and a very thrilling sight. The plain was wooded, and the early autumn frosts had painted the foliage with gorgeous tints which glowed under the level rays of the setting sun. A winding river showed here and there between the trees, and we knew that, hidden among the groves, lay the city of Suchow, around which our thoughts had centred for so many months, ever since the day at Pingliang when David Tõrnvall had laid his finger upon the map and said: 'Here is the city which awaits your coming.'

We sat until the sun had set nor did we care to speak, so full was the mind of each, of thought concerning all we had come through, and all that yet lay before us. Gradually the darkness closed in, and by starlight we slowly walked back to the inn, our hearts beating with high courage and great confidence in God our strength and our exceeding joy.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SPRING OF WINE

ANCIENT Suchow, known as Chiuchüan—the Spring 361
of Wine—has vanished, having been replaced by the 563
present town which has only arisen within recent years. The destruction of the former city being caused by the last great Mohammedan rising in 1862, the new settlers enforced a regulation ordaining that no Moslem should be allowed to reside within the walls, in consequence

361 563 of which the eastern suburb has become the centre of business with Turkestan merchants, who are all Moslems.

On approaching the city we passed a lovely temple retaining the old title of 'the Spring of Wine.' Its grounds still contain a reedy basin wherein sparkling waters continually bubble forth.

Through the great gate we entered this eastern suburb, a far more un-Chinese settlement than anything we had hitherto seen. At the inn doors stood groups of travellers clad in wadded coats of striped cotton, with loose trousers stuffed into high leather boots. They wore a species of turban, to which they owe the Chinese name of 'Chantow,' meaning 'Bound head.' Many had brown curly beards, but several were of a fair complexion with reddish hair and beard. They spoke a language utterly unknown to us, which we learned later was Turki, and has no resemblance to Chinese.

On the stalls cotton materials were on show, hand-woven in Turkestan, with patterns and colours totally unlike Chinese goods; rugs, too, and gorgeous saddle-bags, while many a Chantow sat by great mounds of dried sultanas, apricots, and plaited strips of dried melon.

346 572 The dome and crescent of a whitewashed mosque[1] now appeared, and as we passed its doors a crowd of young Moslem schoolboys ran out. They had been studying Arabic and the Koran under the tuition of the 'Ahung.' All were strikingly goodlooking, but had an air of haughty arrogance never seen in Chinese scholars.

485 326 Every smithy was busy shoeing magnificent horses, and all the inns were overflowing, the east suburb being the halting-ground where every traveller rests himself and his beasts, provisions himself for the exacting journey ahead, and repairs his carts and changes their

[1] [in Suchow-- Analyst]

axles, since the gauge required for the desert is a foot 485 wider than that used in the provinces of North China. 326

The first night was spent in a very cold, damp, north room of a noisy, dirty and crowded inn. The next day, 681 however, we secured the use of a small private court, containing an apartment with a tiny kitchen, where our servant was able to prepare the meals. This small court had been built by a Kashgar merchant, whose business necessitated frequent journeys to Suchow, Hankow and Peking. A few years previously, a deal in business involved him in a transaction through which he incurred the displeasure of a high official, the result being that he was placed under arrest, and forced to reside in that portion of a Chinese prison corresponding to the old English 'Debtors' Gaol.' No trial had taken place, and consequently no judgment had ever been passed on him. Any representations that he might make had been bandied from court to court, as each successive official refused either to investigate the case, or to take any action which might bring upon himself the wrath of some other notable, from whom depended the tenure of his own office. When we reached Suchow, Mr. Li's imprisonment, now ancient history, was merely nominal, and he was free to come and go at pleasure, provided he did not leave the precincts of the town. He was one of our first visitors, and we found him to be a man of alert mentality, and of great knowledge of the world. His morals and general outlook were those of Islam, to which he had added under the stress of trouble the Chinese vice of opium-smoking. He seemed, however, much pleased that we should be occupying his premises, and urged us not to hesitate to report to him if the manager failed to make us as comfortable as possible.

The news of our arrival spread rapidly through the 600 town, and even before we had time to pay our respects to the head military and civil officials, some of the young students of the local colleges arrived asking us to accept them as pupils for the study of English. It took us several weeks of steady refusals to convince these eager young men that neither offers of money nor prospects of prestige would induce us to teach languages, nor would we coach young aspirants to the government offices!

One afternoon the inn court was invaded by a bodyguard of grey-uniformed soldiers, the escort of the Minister of Defence, who came in person to return our call. This clever old gentleman was within a month of the celebration of his seventieth birthday. He was keenly interested in all matters, both Eastern and Western, and the one-and-a-half hours of his visit passed quickly in conversation on many topics. Unfortunately, however, young 'Welcome Home' let us down badly, for during this interview, unaccustomed as he was to high society, the excitement told so badly on his brain that when he served the tea it was evident he had omitted all tea-leaves from the pot, a stream of clear water being all that issued forth!

From the very first day we began our search for permanent premises, and visited all available empty houses in the city, but not one of these proved possible, being either dark, dismal, or rat-infested, not to mention the usual reason for their vacancy, namely, a troublesome ghost which refused to be laid! It was, nevertheless, essential to the work to secure suitable headquarters, and we knew it must be part of the Divine plan to supply our need. We therefore decided not to entangle ourselves in any way, but to wait quietly in the inn till what we required should be forthcoming.

Our expectation was not in vain, for only a few days later Dr. Kao informed us he had been approached by one of the leading gentlemen of Suchow, with the suggestion that he should rent his vacant house for the Bible-School premises, and also he had added the polite words, that it would give him the greatest pleasure if the three ladies would occupy the pavilion standing in his flower-garden, and which was now quite empty. It sounded rather like a fairy-tale, somewhat too good to be true ; nevertheless, a few days later we moved our belongings bodily to Chang-si-yeh's attractive property.

On the west side of the roadway that traversed it were the two Bible-School courtyards ; one filled with living-rooms, while the other contained a spacious hall, suitable for the Class-Room and the Sunday services. The third courtyard was only waste ground, but our students soon levelled and planted it out as a vegetable garden ; here, also, the preaching-tent was pitched. On the east side was the entrance to Mr. Chang's own private house, and through this we passed into a charming flower-garden, backed by an orchard. Under the cloudless October sky, the autumn-tinted fruit-trees looked very lovely, and we felt the lines had indeed fallen for us in pleasant places. An ornamental building of carved wood faced the parterre, and if the structure was somewhat flimsy (being mainly composed of delicate fretwork and white paper), it yet commanded a delightfully sunny aspect, and a glorious view of the snow-capped Tibetan mountains, some rising to 15,000 feet. The single room within was of considerable size, and held two recessed *kangs*. The central portion we immediately arranged as our dining and guest-receiving room, while each end was furnished to suggest a bed-study-sitting-room.

797 342 The floor was of very loosely trampled earth, and there was no ceiling, the roof being merely of pine-wood rafters, boarded on the outside. Strange to relate, even these bright premises were not free from the universal hauntings, for on the verandah stood a sedan-chair which inspired such terror to the whole family that none would venture to sit in it. Some months previously Mr. Chang had celebrated his birthday with a banquet, to which he had invited all his relatives and friends. Having feasted not wisely but too well, he sat down in this chair, and throwing out his chest disported himself with the typical gestures of a Chinese Mandarin. While the younger men of the party carried him joyously to and fro, he made suitable faces, saying : 'Now do I look like a Mandarin ?' After a few minutes of this sport he stepped out from the chair, when, to the horror of the whole party, it was found that his mouth remained permanently twisted on one side ; and as an added terror a few days later his wife developed a similar affliction.

776 It was most unfortunate that the time of our moving in coincided with the prolonged period, during which the god controlling the element of Earth forbids mankind to disturb his dominion. We were therefore implored not to build our kitchen stove, not to plaster a wall, nor even to mix the mud necessary to stop the crevices through which the wind was whistling, until this season expired. Courtesy demanded that we should not outrage the feelings of our kind host, but we decisively informed him that as Christians we were entirely freed from the power of demons, and the bondage of such superstitions.

His reply was : 'That is true and right, and I know that none of these things can harm *you*, because you are under the complete protection of your God. I, on the other hand, am under the power of these influences, and it would be highly dangerous for me, or for you, to take a midway position, for then we would be removed from protection, and consequently exposed to the assaults of both forces.' 776

The whole time of our residence in Suchow, Chang-si-yeh's pavilion remained our home, and we became much attached to it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CHALLENGE

Our new home was situated in the best residential 361
quarter of the town. Most of the neighbouring families had beautiful gardens like our own, and between us and the western city wall stood all the most important temples, to which plantations of young trees added a great charm. The neighbourhood was quiet, and free 776
from business traffic, Suchow possessing no gate on the western side. Twenty miles distant is situated the frontier fortress of Kiayükwan, where the Great Wall ends, and of which the popular saying is : 'Kiayükwan is the West Gate of Suchow.' As the deities of wind and water (Feng shui) would be deeply insulted if the wall were pierced, the inhabitants of Suchow would be terrified at such an action, fearing the destruction of the city by flood.

Our first walk was to a temple standing in large 778
grounds, and approached by a splendid poplar avenue. We were discussing, as we proceeded, the details of the new life ahead, when our eyes were riveted by an inscription over the temple door, hanging between two

778 colossal Warrior-Guardians, who, javelin in hand, offered defiance to any visitor that might question the supremacy of the gods within. *'What? So you have come too?'* were the words which confronted us, and which seemed even to be audible, so startling was the impression made. Yes, we had come; and we knew full well it would be a battle to the blood between the forces here represented and those for which we stood.
772 It was, therefore, with a sense of solemnity that we
775 entered,[1] to find ourselves at once in 'the Courts of
532 Hell'—for that is the name given to this shrine where the horrors of the Buddhist Place of Torment are realistically portrayed in clay-modelled figures, crudely coloured, but astonishingly vigorously done. The story begins by the spirit of a man, who having just died, finds himself divested of all fleshly covering, and must now in consequence start on his weary peregrination through the Underworld, where, for each sin committed in the body, the soul must now receive an exact retribution. In the next scene various other discarnate individuals knelt before the presiding Deity, while the doings of each one during their earth-life were weighed in accurately-adjusted scales. Around, more hapless beings underwent different tortures; some being dipped in a sea of blood, others sawn asunder between two planks, while others again were crushed like grain between upper and nether millstones. The covetous eyes were gouged out; the slanderous tongue was torn from the roots; and grappling-hooks fastened into the flesh of the lustful, peeled off the skin in ribbons. Here and there slender bridges, hanging over fearful chasms, were crossed by trembling pilgrims, whose escape from unknown consequences depended on the poise earned by former self-denials, and everywhere the minions of the merciless Judge gloatingly watched the sufferings of

[1] [a temple in Suchow -- Analyst]

their victims, whose every attitude expressed the very 772
acme of agony. At last, having received its due, the 775
spirit was seen preparing for a new incarnation, as the 532
Wheel of Life revolving had now a fresh rebirth to
distribute. This time the protagonist is to enter the
body of a pig ; and here the artist reached the highest
degree of plastic talent. Though it were but to wallow
in the mire, the prospect of once more breathing the
fresh air, of basking in the kindly rays of the sun, and
of living the familiar life of earth, filled the hunted spirit
with untold joy, marvellously indicated by the glance
thrown over the shoulder, as the porcine snout descended
like a mask upon the features.

An old priest was superintending a party of worshippers, 769
who had come to burn gold and silver paper 782
folded to represent money, this being considered suitable
to be offered as votive-sacrifices for the dead.
These people had lately lost a father, and picturing him
as wandering through such an abode of pain, were now
doing all they possibly could to come to his assistance.
Leading the group was a young man, his son, who
doubtless in all matters of daily life showed himself to
be far-sighted and intelligent, but who now, with
a mind blinded by heathenism, sought to impress upon
the torturers the fact that he was in a position to buy
off his father's doom by such large sums of mock-coinage
as any god might be flattered to receive. The
smoke rose, and the spirit-treasure passed out of sight.
The gods would doubtless now see to it that part, at
least, of the debtor's bill was paid !

Our immediate business was to let the people of 527
Suchow know of our arrival, and very soon, by means of
posters, the news was spread, and the words : 'The
Christians have come ! ' were on the lips of all. It was
greatly to our advantage that the whole city happened

521 to be *en fête* to celebrate the seventieth birthday of the Minister of Military Defence. Thousands of people gathered from the surrounding districts, and scores of officials and their families came long journeys, to offer congratulations. Theatrical entertainments were provided for the guests, and great and prolonged feastings were in progress. 010 We gladly saw in this an opportunity to reach a far wider circle than we could otherwise have done, and at once set the whole of our band to work in preparing parcels of books and tracts, done up with strips of scarlet paper, this being a necessary adjunct to every festal presentation. These were then distributed among the guests, who expressed themselves as delighted to receive them, and subsequently carefully carried them away.

The arrangement of the students' work was next planned, with a view to combining a consecutive course of study with a large amount of practical Evangelisation. Promptly at midday the men left home for a two hours' period of street preaching in town, suburb, and near villages, combined with the sale of Gospels. Every shopkeeper was personally visited, and the restaurants, for which Suchow is famous, were approached with an offer to decorate their walls with pretty floral posters, an offer which was in many cases gratefully accepted. The most tactful and experienced men were told off to the Moslem settlement in the eastern suburb, for any man doing this work must be prepared to receive insults without retaliation, and to be able to keep his temper when his books are bought only to be torn to shreds before his eyes. A group of the more genial and simple souls was deputed to the north suburb, which is almost entirely composed of spacious enclosures used by the Mongolian drovers to install their caravans of camels, which bring cotton from

Hami, raisins from Turfan, camels' hair from Barkul, and black lamb-skins from Kuche.

The women students with ourselves undertook the house-to-house visitation throughout the whole city, this being a most important item, for the pioneer missionary is faced with a very big proposition on first entering a town, the doors of which are instinctively closed against him, as the minds of their inhabitants are instinctively hostile to his message. It is uphill work, and the law of gravitation is in favour of the obscurantists. The missionary, therefore, cannot afford to neglect the smallest opening by which human intercourse may be established. A woman sewing at her front door will generally respond to such a remark as: 'You are a good needlewoman! Where did you learn that fancy stitch?' and will often proceed to question us as to whether we can sew and cook and make shoes. Sometimes it is our turn to answer the remarks made in our hearing by two old dames, who thus are testing our knowledge of the language. 'They wear a skirt every day! How does she stick those glasses on her nose? You can see by the look of them that the lucky stars met in their horoscopes!' No such remarks are allowed to go unanswered, and the pince-nez will pass from hand to hand. Curiosity thus aroused often leads to an invitation to come in and rest, and no such advance is ever met by a refusal. As we leave, we are generally encouraged by overhearing such comments as these: 'They are quite easy to talk to! They might be one of ourselves! We will go over and see them next week.' And it sometimes happened that having come to stare, they stayed to believe.

The autumn days soon gave way to early winter, and the restrictions placed on his devotees by the 'God of Earth' were removed, so that we were able to buy a

680 cartload of loess soil, and at last proceed with the putting of our house in order. A fireplace built entirely of mud-bricks, into which a grating of half-a-dozen iron bars was fixed, made a very satisfactory cooking-stove, and a paraffin-oil tin let into the back served as a boiler. We also set up an iron stove we had brought with us, at great labour and expense, but which proved to be not only an immense comfort but an absolutely vital necessity, when the real depth of winter came upon us.

322 767 We visited several carpenters' shops in the hope of finding ready-made furniture, such as a table, bench, or stool, but the only articles for sale were, in every case, nothing but coffins. Red, black, blue, varnished or unvarnished coffins were temptingly ranged before us, but for the living, nought ! Fortunately, however, our kind landlord came to the rescue by lending us a table and three stools, while the coffin-shop supplied us with as many planks as we required. These, supported on bricks and packing-cases, made the dresser, bookcase, writing-table and beds. A side-shelter was next transformed into a sleeping apartment for our women students, and thus, all being in order, we fondly imagined ourselves comfortably settled, but the neighbours shook their heads sagely, saying : ' Wait till the winds come ! '

132 Our happy illusions were soon dispelled, for one night, not long after, we were suddenly awakened by the alarming roar of a tremendous gale, shaking the boughs of the poplar-trees and stripping off every leaf that remained. This preliminary onslaught was then quickly followed by an unearthly yell as the whole force of the tempest descended upon the city, carrying with it volumes of sand that whipped and cut against our pavilion like a volley of musketry. Without a moment's interruption the gusts swept in through the

fragile paper windows, deluging us with grit as we lay in 132 our beds. No sleep was possible, and when daylight came we found our room literally buried under a thick layer of Gobi Desert dust, the shape of each one's head being defined on the pillow, while the soft earth of the floor was ripple-marked like the ribbed seashore at low tide. Experience taught us, subsequently, that the only way to smooth it down was to sprinkle the surface with water, and then spend all our spare moments in stamping it flat. This process, however, was not very successful, for the powdery soil remaining loose through the winter, small articles were frequently buried in it, only reappearing at intervals when an extra watering brought them once more to the surface !

For forty-eight hours the fearful blasts persisted, without one moment's pause. Not a drop of rain fell throughout, and we finally emerged with hair, eyebrows, skin and clothes heavy with the particles, and with bodies exhausted and nerves strained by the tension and magnetic quality of the storm. The danger to caravans when overtaken by such a visitation is extreme, and many instances are recorded of carts, horses and drivers, all of which having been first battered to pieces disappeared for ever under the roaring sands.

The sight of our room afterwards made us realise that something must be done to stop up the crevices and holes in the woodwork. The large sheets of brown paper used by the Bible Societies in sending their goods by post met our difficulty, and for one whole day we cut out strips, which our old retainer with the help of a basin of paste affixed to every crack through which, only too plainly, the daylight gleamed. Suchow being totally unprotected from the vast expanse of Gobi on the west, and the sands of Mongolia on the north, this last experience proved to be but the first of many, and

000 we began to view the incoming winter, under present conditions, with a certain amount of anxiety. Seeing therefore that our life must necessarily be somewhat rigorous, we added a layer of camel's hair to our already wadded Chinese garments, and thus equipped we were subsequently enabled to meet temperatures registering fifteen degrees Fahrenheit below zero.

262 During this first winter we were fortunate in securing from a Moslem farmer excellent milk, but food supplies in these localities are very variable, not only from city to city, but from year to year ; and after a few months, cattle disease carried off most of the cows, so our dairy supply failed completely. Mutton, yak beef and pork could be bought, but all were of a poor quality. Vegetables, however, were excellent and eggs plentiful. Our daily dinner was a Chinese meal of rice or macaroni, but for several months of each year no fat of any kind was obtainable for cooking purposes, with the exception of linseed-oil, which is commonly used by Kansu people ; unfortunately, in spite of every effort, we were never able to accustom ourselves to the strong taste, nor eat it without revulsion. Our winter preparations also included a large quantity of wheat, which we ourselves ground as needed, and which gave us a good store of bran with which to fill large baskets of eggs, this being the only way to prevent their freezing.

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712 Our first expedition was taken before the winter closed in, when travelling would be too hard. It took the form of a trip to the fortress of Kiayükwan, which was only twenty miles distant. The road was over a barren and stony waste, leading slightly uphill, so that the journey took six and a half hours to perform. It was a dismal landscape, though the Richthofen Range looked magnificent with snow to its very base, and we also crossed a good many beautifully clear streams on

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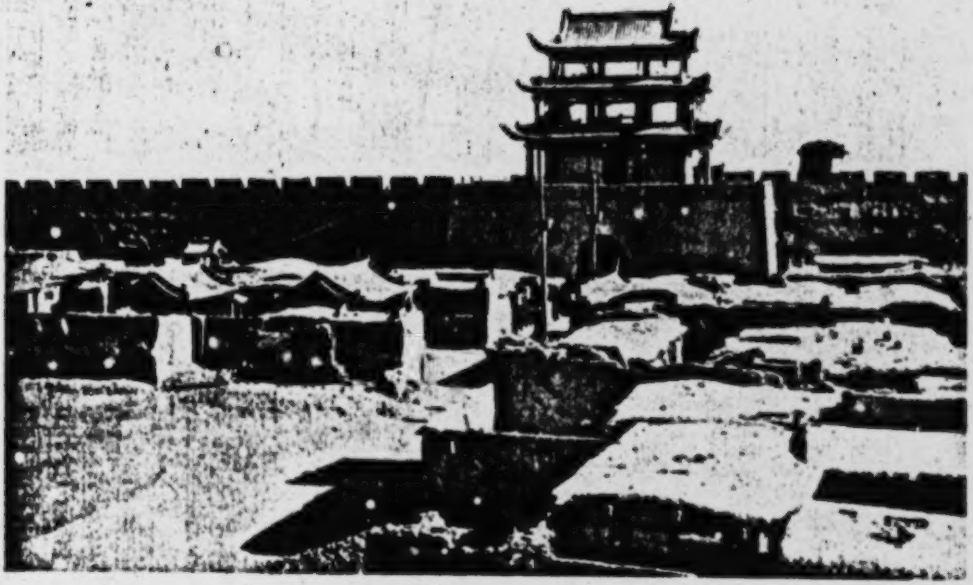
[FACING p. 94]



The Fortress of Kiayükwan.

"When I leave thy gates, O Kiayükwan
My tears may never cease to run."

To face page 94.

138 712 the way. At a distance of about two miles a high gate-tower of many storeys came in sight, flanked on either side by a clay wall, which on the south stretched for seven miles to the foot of the Tibetan mountains. On this side lay green meadows richly watered by springs, and for this reason the name Kiayükwan has been given, meaning 'The Barrier of the Pleasant Valley.' The position of the fortress has indeed been well chosen in view of excluding invaders from the west, this being the narrowest point between naked hills on the north and south. Under the shadow of the walls a stream is crossed by a wooden bridge, and from here the path mounts steeply to the door of the southern quarter, where all the inns are situated. We passed through two great vaulted gates into the first enclosure, which holds within it the ruins of a small town, now mostly uninhabited. The splendid outer walls, with their loophole battlements and towers, and the Yamen and military barracks, still occupied, give an impression of mediaeval importance to a place which otherwise would be only a tumbledown village.

487 A most imposing gate led out on the north side, and beyond this, as far as eye could reach, was an undulating desert over which the wintry wind was blowing. A hundred yards from the gate a stone tablet proclaims this to be 'Earth's Greatest Barrier.' The scene was desolate beyond words, and if ever human sorrow has left an impress on the atmosphere of a place, it is surely at Kiayükwan, through whose portals for centuries past a never-ending stream of despairing humanity has defiled. Disgraced officials, condemned criminals, homeless prodigals, terrified outlaws, the steps of all these have converged to that one sombre portal, and through it have for ever left the land of their birth. The arched walls are covered with poems wrung from

487 broken hearts, nor can anyone leave China by this road without peculiar pain, and even tears.

> ' When I leave thy gates, O Kiayükwan,
> My tears may never cease to run.'

The most illustrious of all the exiles who have trod this *Via Dolorosa* was the great Sage and Philosopher, Lao-dze, who here turned his back on the land which had refused his teaching, and sought for himself an unrecorded grave in the wilderness beyond.

Among all those tragic inscriptions, from the day of our visit, one message of *Hope* now hangs, printed in crimson letters so large and clear, that every tear-filled eye can see it : '*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.*'

CHAPTER XVIII

A PRODIGAL SON

806
527 THE Chinese, together with other ancient peoples, observe the lunar month, and date their calendar by the Agricultural Year ; New Year's Day, consequently, falling irregularly between the last week of January and the middle of February, marks also the time for the sowing of the crops. The official calendar, issued by the Peking Board of Rites, is often at variance with local almanacs, so that we found the people of Suchow were much disturbed as to whether the first day of the first moon should be the coming Thursday or Friday. The question was not decided until Wednesday afternoon, when the Town Crier, beating a gong, patrolled the streets announcing in a loud voice, ' To-morrow is New Year's Day ! '

Part of the complicated debt-system in which the 527
whole of China's financial organisation is involved, is 426
the general settlement of accounts, which takes place in the last month of the year. A son's inheritance of debt often exceeds the property devolving on him by the death of his father, which debt he hands on in turn to his own children. A creditor always claims large interest, which is due to be paid in the twelfth moon, but in order to collect the amount the problem is when and how to find the debtor. For many are the subterfuges and evasions practised by the impecunious, when the voice of the unwelcome visitor is heard in the distance—back-doors, roof-apertures, gaps in walls, all come in handy, and 'not at home' is the usual policy! During the final five days, the city is noisy throughout with the sounds of wrangling, quarelling and violent invectives, the uproar increasing in a regular *crescendo* until the appointed time when each family must gather within its own walls, to observe the religious rites necessary for the auspicious ushering in of the New Year. From this moment, suddenly, everything changes! Men, who a few hours before were heaping curses on each other's heads, now meet with urbane countenances, and exchange bows suitable for a Court function. Cordial greetings are also mutually expressed, and as with a sponge all animosities are, apparently, wiped off the slate of memory, while the whole population gives itself over to merry-making and feasting.

Long before dawn we were awakened by the sound of 527
bursting crackers; temple-bells were clanging, gongs 574
were booming, and the subtle perfume of incense crept into our room. As soon as the doors were opened, every man in the compound, dressed in his best clothes, came in to pay his respects, and from then onwards, throughout the day, we received visits of ceremony from all our

527 574 gentlemen acquaintances, it being the social custom that no woman should pay calls before the fifth of the month. Each visitor was duly offered tea and light refreshments, and each on leaving laid on the table his scarlet visiting-card.[1]

527 525 The next morning early, the main street was converted into one long casino for the purpose of gambling, each croupier spreading a table, bordered by cash strung on red cords, and to these tables the townsmen and villagers flocked to enjoy the excitement of play for high stakes. For three whole days the crowds were so dense that no horse traffic of any description could pass. On the flat mud roofs the women gathered in swarms to watch the fun. All had painted their faces, and wore brilliant dresses of green, pink or scarlet, while artificial flowers decked their hair. But underneath all this gay scene many a tragic shadow was concealed, and darkness had scarcely closed in when the Mission compound was aroused by urgent calls for help, the doctor being sent for to save, if possible, the life of a woman who, driven to despair by her husband's losses, had tried to kill herself. During the next few days many were the cases of suicide dealt with; some for an overdose of opium; others for swallowing the white face-powder which was always at hand; others, again, jumped down wells, or cut their throats; while one woman, more determined to end her miseries than the rest, had eaten handfuls of whole dried peas, after which she had very deliberately swallowed several bowlfuls of water, believing that no medical aid could possibly avail to restore her to life.

527 796 Within a week from New Year's Day came another ceremonial date, named 'The Greeting of Spring,' when this season is represented by a roughly-modelled, symbolic mud-cow, whose body is filled with dried

[1] [the New Year Festival -- Analyst]

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927

AF13 Northwest China AF13

fruits, emblematic of fertility. To burn incense before 527 this grotesque monster came the highest official of the 746 city, in his green sedan-chair, while groups of workmen of the various trade guilds formed themselves into pageant scenes and walked round the town in procession. Needless to say, this was for us also a very busy day, with the result that later on, while itinerating in the country, we frequently were welcomed by people in their homes, who showed us books bought from us on that occasion.

On our return home, we found our landlord's family 596 in a strange state of confusion, and learnt that, during 627 their absence, while merry-making with their friends, a beautiful fur gown had been stolen from the eldest daughter's room. We soon realised that they were more disturbed by the incident than the actual value of the garment warranted, and the fact soon came to light that there was in existence another member of the family of whom we had hitherto never been aware, namely, the ne'er-do-well eldest son. From gambling and opium-smoking, he had gradually sunk so low as to become a member of a gang of thieves, and it was undoubtedly he who had walked into the empty house, opened his sister's cupboard and abstracted the valuable robe.

After the doors were closed for the night, all the senior members of the family clan were called in, and a solemn conclave was held. The father himself was a typical specimen of a gentleman of the ancient school. Tall and thin, with a straggling grey beard, he wore [302] large goggles, and finger-nails two inches long. Daily he might be seen pacing up and down the path of his loved flower-garden, smoking a long pipe with a slender stem, regarding, doubtless, the theoretical care of his pretty plants as the fitting, final occupation of a con-

596 ventionally blameless life. He was but sixty years of
627 age, but sought in inactivity and premature decrepitude an excuse for shelving all responsibility as regards disciplining his children. On this occasion, however, the disgrace being flagrant, his self-esteem was so humiliated as to wound his pride to the quick, and to disturb his wonted equilibrium. Having decided what should be the culprit's punishment, and requiring for its execution the help of some of the younger men, he now proceeded to address the family council in the following terms:

'I have no option but to take action, the disgrace brought upon my country and family being so great. This boy ought to die; but because, if I hand him over to an official, the family name will yet further be dragged in the dirt, with your help we can carry through what honour demands. To-night we will dig his grave, and in it shall my son be buried alive.'

There was no one present to plead the young man's cause, while even his wife could only silently weep, and bow her head under this fresh sorrow. One relative, however, did grasp the terrible urgency of the situation, and slipping unnoticed from the room, he ran to Dr. Kao, whom he roused from sleep, and presently both entered the room, where things were still unaltered. After expressing great sympathy, Dr. Kao now came forward with a suggestion: 'You must not despair,' he said. 'You know nothing of the Grace of God, nor of His power, through Jesus Christ, to change the heart and save sinners from themselves. Give me charge of the boy and I will deal with him.'

A party of men, accordingly, set off at once to the thieves' quarters, and in an hour's time the prodigal, bound with ropes, was standing before his father. The alternatives were then placed before him in a few

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forcible words—to remain in his father's hands meant a living death; in the Doctor's hands unrelenting discipline. He might take his choice. The decision was quickly made; he gave Dr. Kao a kowtow, and then followed him home, to taste, for the first time in his life, a régime of justice tempered with mercy. On entering the class-room the next morning, knowing nothing of this incident, we saw sitting on a bench by the door a terrified specimen of humanity, with his toes thrust into ragged shoes, and wearing an indescribably ancient, greasy, sheepskin coat. Together with the other men present he stood up on our arrival, when we naturally took him for an opium patient—the dull eye, the sniggering leer, and the plain marks of enfeebled will-power being glaringly evident, stamping him as a moral delinquent of a particularly degraded type. Dr. Kao gave him just four days to get over the shock of quitting the drug, during which time he was forbidden to leave the premises, and then, immediately, certain duties were appointed him. But still no sort of improvement showed itself; he neglected his work; flounced about with an unpleasant smirk on his face; and when an enquiry was held as to the whereabouts of the fur robe, giggled and sniggered, persisting that he knew nothing whatever about it. The end came swiftly and summarily. He received a sound flogging, from which he arose, potentially, a reformed character. He immediately produced the pawn-ticket from some greasy pocket, took his broom and set to work to sweep the courtyards, clean the rooms, and carry water. He soon proved himself an industrious and capable man, toiling from dawn to dark without a word of complaint. The expression of his face changed, and showed the satisfaction which he felt in knowing that someone had taken him in hand who was strong enough

596 to control him. So great, indeed, was the change in
this restored and reinstated prodigal, that twelve
627 months later, when we made a long and arduous journey to distant cities outside the Great Wall, he came with us as our personal carter, and fulfilled his duties with ability. So much for the development of the natural man, under wise and firm discipline, fairly and justly administered ; but when the time came for our leaving Kansu, there had still been no evidence of spiritual life. One could not say of him, in the language of St. Paul : '*It is a new creation*' ; the Prodigal had left his swine, but had not yet ' come to his Father.'

CHAPTER XIX

A TRIP TO KINTA

494 At the end of March, a good many of our students,
being obliged to return to their farms for a short period,
484 we, with the remainder of the Band, made a trip in a north-easterly direction to visit Kinta, the only city lying between Suchow and Mongolia. As it was barely thirty miles distant we fully hoped to reach it easily in one day, although it was necessary to take the large cart for the Chinese women, in addition to some heavy loads of books and the tent. It being the first of April, subsequent events were in character with that day, the carter being one of those jolly rascals well known to travellers in China, who combine a sporting instinct with a very plausible tongue ! He offered no sort of objection to our weighty baskets, but also took care, we noticed, to line the bottom of the cart with a layer of his own, unspecified, merchandise.

'A little luggage, more or less,' said he. 'What's that? Look at my team. The best mules in Suchow!'

However, on the morning of our departure, the strong animals displayed the day before had disappeared, being now replaced (on account of sudden illness!) by three underfed and skinny mules, whose harness only half-concealed sore backs, yet to which the customary red-paper tickets were affixed, which assured the simple-minded traveller that the average pace was 'one thousand *li* by day, and eight hundred *li* by night.'

'The main road is under water,' the driver casually remarked, 'but I know every path in the whole district, and will take you by a route which, although it means *one* night on the journey, will save you from all mud-pits!' We had heard roads were bad, so easily fell into his well-prepared trap, and saw nothing strange in passing the livelong day in a featureless, arid land; but at sunset, a few trees on the horizon showed that we were reaching an irrigated belt, and we drew up before a single, lonely farm nearly surrounded by sand. We had expected an inn, but this house contained only two rooms, in one of which twelve men were sleeping, while the other seemed already overflowing with women and babies! The cart was turned round to shield us from the fierce wind, and we were preparing to spend the night in it, when the women, taking pity on us, made room for us on their *kang*. When the longed-for cup of tea arrived it was painful disappointment to find the water was brackish, so that the more we drank the thirstier we grew. After we had settled for the night, our deceptive carter called outside the window: 'You must rise,' he said, with a merry chuckle, 'at dawn if you wish to get in by nightfall. It is but ten miles, but those miles are long!' Accordingly, before sunrise we started once more on the lonely track and for

494 hours travelled on, meeting no one. Once we passed a tiny fragment of humanity, the corpse of a little baby, 484 thrown away by some traveller. Now and again, wherever a slight eminence showed itself, a mound of stones, constructed to look like a human figure, had been erected by the Mongols as an altar to their god. Our chariot wheels drove very heavily, and by common consent we sank into a deep silence, lest conversation should increase our thirst. Towards midday we met a traveller, who genially enquired whither we were wending ? 'To Kinta,' was our reply. 'To Kinta !' he exclaimed, leaping up in his seat, 'but you are going in the opposite direction !'

At this juncture our resourceful carter came running up. 'I am taking this road,' he explained, 'to avoid mud-pits,' and with one meaning look he immediately made an accomplice of the stranger, who now in a level voice remarked : 'Certainly *this* way you will find neither mud nor pits,' and promptly drove on. This led us to speak straightly to our deceiver, whose quick wits immediately supplied him with a subterfuge.

'Kinta *city* ? That is still a long way off, but your man, who engaged me, said you wanted to preach your religion in Kinta *district* ; we shall enter that in a few hours.' Nightfall found us wandering over boggy ground, where various farmsteads dimly outlined themselves against the sky. And here our perfidious guide for once showed his hand. 'I have relations living near here,' he announced, his eyes sweeping the landscape ; 'charming people ! a good house, too ; plenty of room, plenty of fodder ; why not spend the night here ? So much better than an inn, you know ; more like your own home.'

There was no choice but to acquiesce, and in a few minutes (the cart having meanwhile stuck in the

morass) the whole of the party made its way on foot to 494
a wretched hovel, where on the damp ground, amidst
indescribable dirt, we spent the night. Incidentally, 484
we discovered that we were expected at this house; and that the carter was smuggling illicit goods to his friends under cover of our tracts. The next day the mules were changed for oxen. 'There are rivers ahead,' said the man, in a confidential whisper; 'nothing like oxen for crossing water. This, my nephew, (here he indicated a lad of about sixteen) 'understands the fords thoroughly, and he will now take you on for the rest of the way.'

Knowing there could be no danger from rivers at this season of the year, but feeling that we might, at this rate, never reach our destination at all, we accepted the new arrangement, trusting 'Welcome Home' to see us safely through; and late that afternoon, in a snowstorm, we reached Kinta.

It proved to be an interesting place, colonised two 361
hundred years ago by people from Taiyüanfu, in 166
Shansi, and though small, yet from its position on well-watered land of large extent, it is a place of importance.

The Golden Tower, from which Kinta takes its name, 346
is in Indian style, as are also many of the temple 177
frescoes and wooden idols of the cities north-west of
Kanchow, showing that at one time Indian art had 532
strongly imprinted its mark in the Province of Kansu. The dome of the tower is said to have originally been covered with pure gold, which was stripped off by the Moslems and replaced by brass; and this having in turn been stolen, the whole tower was subsequently whitewashed, as it is to-day.

In the spring the temples all hold separate festivals 796
in honour of their respective gods, and we were in 776
Kinta when the *Cheng Wang* (protective deity of the

796 town) was carried into the country in a sedan-chair. Here he was required to bless the sown fields, and also 776 to call in his subordinate demons, whom he holds in check while the grain is ripening, lest they work mischief on the peasants, but whom he again releases after all the crops are gathered in. He was escorted by a big official procession, to the sound of pipes and cymbals; but so soon as the idol was safely deposited in the village shrine, where it was to spend a few days, the whole company made a rush for the courtyard, where we were staying, and listened attentively for over an hour to our singing and preaching.

600 One other afternoon was spent in the house of a man whom we had first met at Suchow, at the New Year's festival. He had then heard us speak, and being much interested had bought a copy of the New Testament. On learning that we had now arrived at Kinta, he invited us to his home in order that we might meet the women of his family. We were received by them with a deference that was almost reverential, the younger members of the house, dressed in their festive garments, being ordered to kneel before us; and it was with the greatest difficulty we prevented their doing us homage as to 'Holy Women.' Mrs. Ma, the wife, was a vegetarian of the third generation; neither her grandmother not her mother having ever broken the vow of a most rigid asceticism, which forbade their tasting any condiment to relieve the insipidity of the dough-string diet, or even the refreshment of a cup of tea. We found her to be extraordinarily understanding in spiritual things, and she responded with an alert mind to the story of the suffering Saviour.

She showed her confidence in us to a remarkable degree, by consenting to take a meal with us the following day, when she returned our call, feeling sure

we would give her nothing that was forbidden by her 000
vow.

The day before we left Kinta, the temple of the 776
Goddess of Mercy was crowded with women worshippers 782
—young brides beseeching the gift of a son; while
mothers who had received a child during the past 796
year, now brought it to be placed under her protection. The baby, covered by a red scarf, was held in its mother's arms under an immense iron bell, when she produced her offering, namely, a handkerchief full of mixed grain. The bell was then struck; the priest took out some of the grain and scattered it over the child's head, with the words, '*May the Goddess of Mercy protect thee; may the God of Plenty endow thee;* then, yellow paper having been burnt, and its ashes smeared over the child's forehead, the priestly incantation was ended, and the mother went away, satisfied that all that could be done to protect the little life from ill-luck and demons had been successfully carried out.

A few days later we visited a famous group of temples 788
known as Wenshu Miao—'The Halls of Learning'— 778
situated only twenty miles from Suchow, at the mouth
of the main Pass through the Southern Hills, and where 796
festivals are held for both Chinese and Tibetans during the spring months. Hundreds of shrines stand on the mountain-side and numerous guest-houses have been built to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims who gather each year, on the first day of the fourth moon. From early dawn carts full of women, followed later in the day by military processions, escorting the chief officials of the town, followed one another up the stony valley in unbroken succession.

The shrines are connected by a labyrinth of small, steep paths which wind in and out around and over the hillside, at each turn of the road revealing a temple, 788 and anyone following the maze will pass hundreds of shrines in the course of his pilgrimage. The ambition 778 of each worshipper is to visit as many idols as possible, 796 and to light a stick of incense and burn paper before each. It is an amazing feat for women who are crippled by bandages and tiny shoes, and many of whom are no longer young, to climb these precipitous paths, sometimes even on hands and knees, in order to reach an apparently inaccessible rock-shrine, yet this is accomplished even over roads made slippery by rain.

Some of the chasms are crossed by rickety wooden bridges which bear such names as 'The Heavenly Road,' or 'The Short Cut to Paradise,' and here old women are helped by husband or son who carries the basket of incense and a pile of votive-paper.

Most of the shrines[1] are modern, but the original cluster of buildings dates from the time of the Emperor Chien Lung, and there are a very few, excavated in the hill, of a much older date, which contain frescoes similar to those found in the famous 'Caves of the Thousand Buddhas' at Tunhwang. At dark on the last evening, bonfires are lighted on every prominence, in which all the remaining incense and paper is burnt, in honour of the gods of the earth, spaces, and mountains.

018 The crowds were by this time accustomed to the sight of the white tent, and the people streamed in and out, listening to the addresses and buying the books. In preparation for the festival the students posted carefully selected passages of Scripture in each of the many shrines, and twelve months later, when we revisited Wenshu Miao, not one of these had been defaced or destroyed.

563 A week later was the Tibetan gathering, and we drove out once more over that stony road. We had

[1] [at Wenshu Miao, see p.107-- Analyst]

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barely entered the river-bed when we were joined by a party of Tibetans, who had come three days' journey to worship the Living Buddha. The young women with babies were mounted on camels, small children sitting before, and others clinging behind, and the remainder of the party rode little donkeys ; one young woman holding before her, across the saddle, a live sheep which was to be their offering to the ' holy man.' As we overtook the party, an old woman, obviously very tired, and whose donkey was flagging, asked if we would let her little granddaughter ride on our cart, as the ass could no longer carry them both, so for the rest of the journey little Arti was our companion. She was a child of the mountains, and this was the first time she had ever ridden in a cart, this being her first visit to the plain.

The Tibetan ritual took the usual form of liturgies, intoned by rows of chanting lamas, who sat cross-legged facing each other, in the great, dark, pillared temple, below the dais on which the Living Buddha sat motionless. Round the door the groups of worshippers rose and fell in innumerable prostrations, bowing each time with their heads to the ground, until the whole forehead was black with dust. During the intervals of the liturgies an attendant ran in and out with a huge brass kettle full of ' butter tea,' and each lama drew from the folds of his shawl a polished wooden bowl, which was filled with the boiling beverage, then licked clean with the tongue, and replaced in the bosom.

The tribes which gather at Wenshu Miao belong to the ' Black Tibetan ' group, and the women wore a handsome head-dress, high-crowned hat made of corrugated felt, and encircled with a splendid fox-brush. At one point of the ceremony a procession was formed, in which all the old women laid the volumes of the

563 sacred books on their shoulders, and marched through the temple courts and out into the valley, led by the chanting lamas, then returned to the temple precincts and piled up the holy books once more in the dark recess of the inner hall.

CHAPTER XX

THE CHILDREN OF THE NORTH-WEST

600 While giving all due credit to the Pioneer Band of men and women, without whom the work accomplished would have been quite impossible, our highest tribute for sheer capacity and pioneering genius must be paid to the Children of the North-West! In spite of persistent poisoning of the mind by superstitious parents warning them that, harmless as we looked, we were steeped in guile, these plucky little people determined to stick it out and see us through. True, they half believed the gruesome stories told of being enticed to remote haunts, where eyes would be gouged out and hearts removed, then cleverly treated by magic and replaced, so that the victims, losing all power of resistance, might blindly follow us to the ends of the earth; but, meanwhile, they would 'wait and see.' We should be under their supervision, and they would prove for themselves whether the parents' old tales turned out to be right or wrong. Accordingly, from the day of our arrival, they watched us—watched us closely! Scouts were appointed to keep us and our doings continually examined, and every detail of our daily life was discussed by them. Did we go for a walk, then a gang escorted us; did we give a singing lesson, then a crowd outside the window soon formed,

till there were more listeners without than within; and 600 as for pretences such as picking up sticks in the garden, or sweeping up leaves—they were as barefaced as they were numerous! At last we boldly announced a Children's Service, when their open delight was unbounded. For a few weeks the class-room sufficed, but as the attractions increased we had to move into our large tent, and there, every evening, the children of Suchow, in spite of everything that had been said, won the day!

The setting sun was the signal for the gathering. A large incandescent paraffin lantern having been lighted, and a few simple decorations to the place added, everything looked gay and felt comfortable, even on a winter's night. Then began a most unusual concert, the baby-organ being supported by a children's orchestra of tambourines, mouth-organs, jingles and pipes, when hymns were sung to the accompaniment of bangings, clangings, clapping of hands and stamping of feet, all in excellent rhythm, and all forming a definite part in a service which proved ultimately irresistibly attractive to the grown-up, cheerless-hearted, weary populace of this great heathen city.

Half the tent was kept for children, but behind the reserved seats crowds of men and women gathered, so that the enclosure was often packed to its uttermost limit. Soldiers, business men, and farmers attended regularly, and even the high officials would slip in to see what was going on; moreover, soon it became the fashion when country cousins came to town, to entertain them with a visit to the Children's Assembly. Each service opened with a brief ritual, including the ceremonial bow and greeting, and a short hymn, which told of the one God, the only Saviour, and the renewing Spirit; and then the whole assembly burst into song, 600 emphasised with actions. The tambourines clanged, the mouth-organs skirled, the bells rang, and every child abandoned itself to the joy of self-expression.

One student, Mr. Tu, developed a great talent for writing easy hymns, and preparing rhythmic adaptations of Scripture words to fit popular tunes. The brief address was an invaluable opportunity for training students, and they learnt to use a blackboard, give an object-lesson, or handle a sand-tray with considerable skill. The meeting finally closed with a simple prayer, in which all joined, and a rally-call to come again the next day.

Wise Confucius taught his disciples that one of the characteristics of 'the Superior Man' is that he never loses the child-heart, and we found that the work among the crowds at fairs and theatres gained immensely as a result of the special service always held for the children. In our city-visiting we soon discovered that the first difficult ploughing of the ground was being done for us by the children. Everywhere we were welcomed, and mothers, whom we had never seen, repeated Scripture-texts, hymns, and sentences of prayer with surprising accuracy. A little band of our bairns would always join us on our visiting expeditions, ready to sing hymns when called upon to do so, to the unutterable delight of the elders.

One little fellow, unconscious that he was being watched, walked down the street singing at the top of his voice, 'Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone'; then coming to a stop before a peanut vendor, and looking him in the face, said, 'Did you *know* that there is only *One* God? and *One* Lord Jesus Christ?' 'Why, no,' said the old man, bewildered. 'Well, it is true,' answered the child, and passed on singing, 'Dare to have a purpose true, and dare to make it known.' Whenever we used our cart, a row of three children would occupy the luggage-ledge at the back, but one place was always reserved for a little beggar girl who was born deaf and dumb. When only a few months old she had been bought by a childless woman, attracted by her beauty; but when she came to an age that made it apparent she would never speak, affection turned to hatred, and she was thrust out of the house to beg her bread, or starve. One morning she had appeared in our court, dressed in rags, with a tiny stick in one hand and a little bag in the other, which she held open, as it were, to plead for a piece of bread. Her thin legs were bleeding with bites from the fierce dogs she had been unable to keep at bay. We dressed the wounds and gave her a hot meal, and from that day onward she became a daily visitor at our home. The women students soon taught her to comb and plait her hair, and wash her face, and after a month, with one daily-assured meal, she developed into a handsome, fresh-looking girl. But her cup of joy seemed full when she discovered the Children's Service, and there, though she could hear nothing, she opened her little mouth like the others, and made a joyful noise to the Author of such happiness as had now, for the first time, come to her. 600

We soon got the name of being lovers of children, and little derelicts, in danger of being frozen to death, were eagerly sought out and told by the scouts that 'the Teachers' would be sure to help them. We were going to our class one bitter winter's morning when we found, behind the outer door, a naked boy of about ten years old. He was sobbing with pain and hunger, and in answer to our questions told us he had been out all the night, and could get no food anywhere. Taking him by the hand we led him to our kitchen for a meal, when on the way we were met by Dr. Kao, who had made himself responsible for investigating all such cases. ' Where is your daddy, my child ? ' he asked.

' Dead,' was the answer.

' Then I suppose you want *me* to be your daddy now ? '

' Yes, please,' said the boy ; and having verified his story, this Christian doctor fed and clothed yet one more orphan.

One night after dark a man arrived at our door with a pencilled note, asking if the women could take charge of the little object he was carrying in his arms. It was an unfortunate slave-girl, looking like a wild beast, with tangled hair, unwashed body, filthy rags, and a foot hopelessly gangrened from frostbite, who turned out to have actually been rescued from the hands of the Governor of the Suchow prison. During the whole of the cold weather this baby of only eight had been made to sleep on a reeking floor, without any sort of covering. Her hair was worn away in places, while her head was permanently bent from the punishment of carrying a brick upon it for hours at a time. Her brutal master had been unwilling to allow Dr. Kao's medical attendance to be enlisted, hoping for her speedy death, but another kindly-hearted official brought pressure to bear and it had ended in the matter being made known to a few people, so that, annoyed by the fear of disgrace, the Governor reluctantly had consented to an operation. The foot was ordered to be amputated, but it was stipulated that her master himself must be present. When the limb had been removed, it was carefully wrapped up in paper and then handed to him with these words : ' You bought the child, so now you can also dispose of this property ! '

Little ' Flower of Grace ' spent four months under our roof, after which she was restored to her own family, 000 and, to the lasting credit of the Suchow Chamber of Commerce be it said, their pressure compelled the unwilling official to endow the child with a sum of money, in compensation for the loss of her foot.

So far so good; but that Governor of the Suchow gaol also secretly vowed vengeance on the Christian community and on its leader, against whom he proceeded to work persistently and undeviatingly, until Dr. Kao himself was a prisoner in his hands!

CHAPTER XXI

BEYOND THE GREAT WALL

Before the end of May we revisited Kanchow, this 134
time taking the lower road which, though still boggy, 491
was passable, but before we reached Kaotai we had crossed many swamps and flooded fields. We also met with salt-encrusted friable earth, where at each step the outer crust broke, and our feet sank into the soft soil beneath. Here no single blade of grass can live, not even the desert lizard darts across the track, and the sunshine reflected from the ash-grey ground diffuses a dead and bluish light. Two miles outside the 000 gate of Kanchow city a crowd of Christian men, women and children stood to welcome us. During the past year this community had been subject to serious persecution, which was even now heading up to a crisis, yet the services were crowded, there were many desiring baptism, and before the summer was over ninety-eight men and women confessed Christ publicly. The whole of June was spent instructing these catechumens, but during the month of July we made an expedition to a

000 third Tibetan Pass and Lamasery at Mati, about forty miles due south of Kanchow. The temple buildings, which proved to be both interesting and extensive, were built against a hill of yellow sandstone, and approached by a flight of one hundred stone steps. The most ancient shrines were in caves hollowed out of the stone and connected by tunnels and galleries which penetrated deep into the cliff. Many of the temples were inaccessible, except by the underground passages, and were lighted by windows cut in the most unexpected parts of the hill, high overhead. The various figures of the Buddha were finely carved, and among his attendant idols, which were Indian in style, were little, slim, alert, female figures with limbs swathed in light drapery and bangles on the ankles. Other rooms were in purely Tibetan style, with walls covered by small earthen *plaques* representing the sitting Buddha, or with well-preserved frescoes said to be the work of Tibetan artists.

During our visit there was masquerade-dancing by the lamas, whose costumes, used in the historical representations, were fine specimens of applied art of the Ming period. The Emperor Chien Lung endowed this Lamasery with one of his own imperial-yellow silk garments and a splendid inlaid saddle. In a dream he saw a unique temple and sent out messengers to seek the place of his vision. They wandered far and wide, but at last came to Mati, in which they at once recognised the object of their quest. The divine origin of the dream was confirmed when they saw a stone bearing the print of a horse's hoof supernaturally impressed by the steed of a deified rider, and to which Mati—' Horse's hoof '—owes its name.

563 Near our camp two families of Aborigines had taken possession of two disused caves in which they lived,

cultivating a small patch of ground. The women 563
wore their hair in a number of small plaits, Tibetan fashion, but their features were more refined than are the Tibetans, and they impressed us as being most intelligent.

We returned to Kanchow over a road which lay 249
between poppy fields now filled with gaunt, naked, dry 437
poppy heads from which the juice had been extracted. By the roadside, at small tables on which were piles of silver, and scales to weigh it out, sat the buyers of crude opium, and before them squatted groups of farmers haggling and quarrelling over the price of the bowls of thick, brown juice—the tragic harvest of their fields. The two months which we were able to give to 000
Kanchow passed only too rapidly, and as we were planning an extensive missionary journey for the early autumn we were obliged to start again for Suchow. We had only reached the first stage of the journey when our mule Lolly showed signs of illness, and we unwisely called in a village veterinary who assured us there was no cause for alarm, and wrote out a prescription.

Shortly after this noxious draught had been administered, the poor beast lay down in the inn court and died. Molly, who in ordinary circumstances would whinny incessantly if separated from her companion, took one long look at Lolly's dead body, heaved a sigh, and never called for her again.

On August 24th we reached Suchow, and immediately began the necessary preparations for the long journey ahead, in the course of which our aim was to visit every city of Kansu situated beyond the Great Wall.

We were a party of eight, including Elder and Mrs. 493
Liu, and their little boy. In order to carry sufficient 322
supplies we had to purchase a cart of the type peculiar to Kansu, having been made by a village carpenter

493 entirely without iron, even to a single nail, in its whole
322 structure. The great wooden wheels, which were
eight feet high, lifted it bodily over the deep rivers, and
the hood, which was covered with grass-matting,
reminded us of a French peasant's waggon. This
distinguished vehicle only cost us about fifty shillings,
and was thoroughly satisfactory. Animals to draw it
492 were more difficult to obtain. The cart-mule of Kansu
seems chronically aged, lean, and sore of back. It
was, consequently, a great prize to secure eventually
a shaft-horse lately come from Urumchi, as it was
therefore already inured to the medicinal waters of the
desert oases, which are too often the cause of death to
animals. On such long journeys, mules are generally
much to be preferred to horses, since on arrival at the
inns the former lie down in the dust immediately to
roll themselves dry, and will then quietly go to their
feed, requiring no further attention, whereas horses, if
they are to be kept in health, demand constant care.
As far as Kiayükwan the road was familiar to us, and
we spent several days in that place, seeing many
787 acquaintances made during our last visit. Tradition
exacts from every traveller a curious custom, namely,
that on leaving the Barrier, pebbles should be thrown
against the outer side of the Great Wall, portions of
which are actually worn away by the constant shower of
missiles. If the traveller is to return in safety the
pebble should rebound towards the thrower, but if not,
it drops into the already high heap, and the man goes
his way onward with a heavy heart. Owing to some
obscure acoustic property, each pebble, when it hits
the Wall, produces a twittering sound, something like
the cheeping of little chickens! Every one heard it
distinctly, and it is said to occur nowhere else.

000 The stones thrown by our party being satisfactorily

returned, and the Military Guard of Kiayükwan having 000
bade us 'good-bye and a pleasant journey,' we started
off in good spirits; nevertheless, silence soon fell on us
when we realised we had turned our backs on China,
and were ourselves literally without the Gate.

We were now[1] to learn by personal experience that the 132
cold of the desert nights is only equalled in intensity by 484
the midday heat. Water being unobtainable for very
long distances, the strain is too great for the animals
during the day, consequently all stages must be taken
by night. It was 5 p.m. when the many-storeyed
tower of the fortress finally disappeared beyond the
horizon, and the undulating expanse of the Gobi was all
that was to be seen lying around on every side. Desert
travelling is a memorable experience. Immediately
after sunset an icy breath steals along the earth's
surface, and instantly the carter dons his heavy sheep-skin
coat. Silence instinctively falls on the party as
the twilight swiftly closes in, and the horses settle to
a steady stride. Thanks to the telegraph poles with [206]
their single wire, we still have *one* link left with the
outer world; so we cannot miss our way.

Generally, once in the night, we passed a string of 494
carts from distant Turkestan, or we heard, a good half-hour
before they actually appeared, the clang of bells
belonging to a caravan of at least fifty camels, which
shuffled past us grunting, soon to be swallowed up in
the surrounding shadows. Some time in the night we 202
heard the jingle of merry bells peculiar to one traveller,
and all would cry out: 'Here come the Mails.' Unlike
all other riders, the Courier comes at a sharp canter, his
heavily-laden horse in a lather. At each stage a fresh
horse and messenger are waiting to carry on the bags.
He is always cheerful, always friendly, and full of
information. According to his account it is we who are

[1] [Between Kiayükwan and Yümen--Analyst]

202 responsible for the weight of his pack, and he was overheard to say: 'If it were not for those Christians my load would be light! If I am not carrying books for them, then it is letters; and if they have no letters,
361 then it is books!' The far-distant barking of dogs sometimes warns us of an encampment,[1] and we can just catch the gleam of the fire glowing like a jewel in the velvet darkness. In the daytime the low, sand-coloured tents are indistinguishable from the universal tawny shade of the ground, and being pegged down very low they seem to melt into the general outlines.

000 We took the journey very slowly, stopping at each little walled town or village, to hold meetings, visit the homes, and distribute Christian literature. Three days brought us to the city of Chikinpu. Had we been choosing its name, however, we should have called it 'Pain Sec,' in memory of a certain little place in the Rhone Valley, where the bread is said to be made only three times a year. At Chikinpu the date for baking must surely have been near, for the bread we ate was certainly three months old! The kindness and hospitality with which we were received were most refreshing and greatly added to our enjoyment of the trip. Here we also met a gentleman who had been one of the Suchow enquirers, but whose officials duties had now brought him to this far-off spot. Through his courtesy, on arrival we found our inn rooms already engaged, and in one of these the unusual luxury of a table and two chairs. He told us an interesting incident which had naturally much impressed him. Many years previously, in witness of a vow, he had set up a tablet in one of the shrines of a famous rock temple a few miles away from Chikinpu. Quite recently, hearing he was again in the neighbourhood, the priest-in-charge had hurried down in alarm to inform him that the tablet had unaccount-

[1] [Between Kiayükuan and Yümen—Analyst]

ably become detached, and had then fallen down. 000 Such an incident would, of necessity, be viewed by the Chinese with dismay, the only possible course open, in order to avoid calamity, being to spread a feast before the gods, and then restore the tablet to its place of honour. The gentleman had, however, in the meantime become a Christian, and on making enquiry found that the day on which he first entered the Mission premises at Suchow was the self-same day on which the tablet had fallen. His answer, therefore, to the priest was as follows: 'You may act as you please with your own temple, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.'

On the evening of our departure from Chikinpu, so 484
as to shorten the journey, we decided to follow a side- 777
path leading over rough ground, and also across a river, before rejoining the main, desert track. When we had gone about three miles our servant suddenly discovered the loss of a large packet of books, which had, apparently, fallen from the back of the cart. Ineffectual search was made until sunset, by which time the carters became reluctant to pursue a strange path by the fading light, so they suggested that, by adding five miles to the journey, we could follow another route which was more frequented than the shorter one. We, however, decided to return to the inn, although we knew that by so doing we should violate every Chinese instinct, the popular idea being, that to retrace one's steps is to court ill-luck. But the next day, both 579
Christians and heathen alike recognised the fact that we had been protected by a Divine Power, for we then learnt, that had we proceeded on our way we must inevitably have arrived at a certain spot just when a band of brigands, sweeping down from the hills, had attacked the caravans travelling that night. We were 000

485 however, We were, obliged the next night at 1 a.m. to pass the same spot[1]—one lonely shed inhabited by an old man, who provides boiling water for passers-by. But on this occasion he would not permit us a moment's delay, and urged us to proceed to our destination with all possible speed; which, needless to say, we did.

CHAPTER XXII

JADE GATE TO TUNHWANG

712 174 FIVE days' journey from Kiayükwan the traveller sees on the farthest horizon a light, elegant tower rising high above the city wall. This is Yümen—'Jade Gate'—through which he passes to Central Asia, and which being visible from a very great distance, is the one dominant feature of the beautiful little town of the same name.

Ancient records dating back to 104 B.C. speak of Yümenkwan—'Jade Barrier'—as terminating the line of guard-houses which were planted at intervals from Chiuchüan—Ancient Suchow—in a north-westerly direction on the Kansu border. A great deal of research has been made by Sir Aurel Stein as well as by other *savants* to elucidate the exact position held by this particular fort. Sir Aurel Stein places it beyond Tunhwang, one hundred and thirty miles west of the little town which now bears its name, while others believe this elusive gate to have been no other than the original structure of Kiayükwan which is, all agree, the modern equivalent of the ancient Barrier. Local opinion, however, confirms Breitshneider's assertion that the modern Yümen is built on the site of the ancient Jade Gate.

[1] [outside the village of Chikinpu--Analyst]

The appearance of the town[1] is not very different from 361
others of the Gobi border, except for its unusual gate, 312
of which the inhabitants are almost unduly proud. It stands in a well-watered belt, and the land is cultivated right up to the city wall. We reached it through a sea of mud, as irrigation was in progress, and in accordance with the careless custom of the Kansu agriculturalist the stream, not being required on the land, had been turned off and allowed to flow down the main road.

We spent several busy, happy days there, as the 000
people were particularly interested and listened willingly. On the morning of our departure, as we left the inn, an old woman pulled one of us by the sleeve in a mysterious manner, and whispered: 'A word about those things that have been lost!' We wondered, what things? Could it be that she had information of our own lost parcel of books, and a sheepskin coat dropped by one of the carters? Seeing our look of interest, the old crone was emboldened to go on with her story. 'You are "Holy Women"; you know secret things, hidden things, things that we cannot divine. Will you, please, tell me before you go, *the name of the thief who stole my cow?*'

Thirty-five miles further on is Pulungki, a city that 361
once must have held at least fifty thousand inhabitants, 133
but which now is nothing but scattered ruins, a few poor inns, and an encircling wall of immense area. During the next few nights we counted ten more deserted towns and villages, and no words can adequately convey the extraordinary sensations evoked by crossing in the moonlight, or in the uncertain pallor of dawn, these abodes of the past, whose deserted streets are sometimes still clearly defined, and where abandoned houses, with yawning doorways, stand tenantless on either side. From dateless ages the Gobi Desert has approached

[1] [YUmen -- Analyst]

361 133 with stealthy steps; moving, like some sluggish organism, till with soft, hungry lips it has seized its prey and absorbed it; and then, replete and satisfied, has lain down triumphant. The surrounding scene is of an unspeakably desolate character, reminding one of a landscape in the moon, only that instead of extinct craters, here are dead and forgotten cities, towns, and villages.

173 All sorts of legends are told about this region.[1] Pulungki is said to have been the original Eden of the human race; any amount of buried treasures lie concealed in caves underneath the soil; demons haunt the whole neighbourhood; a hole in the ground with steps leading down may mean a robber's den, or, on the other hand, it may be the entrance to some Arabian Night's grotto, piled with glittering stones!

Circumstantial stories of such discoveries were told us. Men, whose names were known, had dug into such a hoard, and by the flare of torches had actually seen the booty, but when they were just on the point of seizing it, a rush of wings had passed overhead, throwing the searchers violently to the earth, and filling them with such terror that to escape with their lives was all they could hope for. Bats? No, not bats, they were too far in for that; besides, the cave had never been opened within the memory of man! Again, one party of excavators entering the far recesses of another subterranean shaft, had seen, to their amazement, a faint glimmer of light. Drawing near they had found a tiny oil lamp burning—a mere speck of flame, but undoubtedly of human origin, as there was a wick, which wick was fed from some enormous vat of vegetable oil, the supply of which had been sufficient to keep the light going for centuries! And to convince us of the truth of these assertions, we were shown certain remarkable,

[1] [Between Yümen and Tunhwang—Analyst]

and obviously antique, vases dug up from the same locality, and which were worthy of a place in a museum. One can wander from end to end of these lonely, melancholy, derelict cities, where on stormy nights the howling winds make play, and the swirls of sand spin down the forgotten avenues like Dancing Dervishes; and nothing can be too weird or too fantastic for the imagination to devise after lingering, even only for a few hours, in such surroundings.

By day we were subject to the illusion of the desert mirage. Again and again our field-glasses assured us of the existence of a large lake ahead, whose shining waters were bordered by standing trees, but as we came nearer there was only the lion-coloured sand, and the long line of the horizon.

We reached the next inn at midnight, and received the following morning the gift of two small cabbages, three turnips, and a little vinegar from a very old woman, who having heard that three 'Preachers of Righteousness' had arrived during the night, was determined to be the first to give them a welcome.

We found her living alone in a miserable hovel. Nevertheless, the ruling desire of her whole being was to be well-pleasing to the gods by purity of actions, hence her ardent desire to meet us, and be taught by us 'the Way of Life.' Living by herself and having no near relatives left, a young man had been fetched in to listen to our words, so that when we were gone he might help her to remember the precious instructions.

There was something inexpressibly pathetic and moving in the way in which she drank deeply of the truth as it is in Jesus, memorising with the utmost reverence the brief prayer we taught her; and when, on the morning of our departure, we went at dawn to

087 bid her farewell, before she would permit the sacred words to pass her lips she washed her face and combed her thin hair, feeling it to be disrespectful to the One True God to address Him unprepared. Such a soul as this, met with on the road of life, one can never forget. She was ripe for the Call; and she heard it, and was glad.

361 The next city is Ansi, which also bids fair to dis-
133 appear under the encroaching sands, as these have
already drifted round it as high as the top of the wall.
It is a cold, storm-swept place, exposed on every side,
and with neither coal nor wood obtainable. The wind
132 is said to blow every day in the year, but in the winter
512 it is so fiercely terrible that all shops are closed, and
733 everything is at a standstill. Every household then
lives, eats, and sleeps on its dung-warmed *kang*, nor is it
surprising that so many while away the weary hours
with the fumes of the opium-pipe. Ansi lies at the
487 cross-roads, where the great track from Suchow turns
off towards Hami and Eastern Turkestan, meeting also
the main road to the Oasis of Tunhwang, four stages
to the south-west. The fame of Tunhwang had already
172 reached us. We had entertained at Suchow a party of
American archaeologists from Harvard University,
who had recently been there for the purpose of seeing
its art treasures. Not being able, however, to fulfil
their purpose, they were returning to Peking, carrying
away a rather unfortunate impression of the Tunhwang
population, and they warned us that we should find them
turbulent and somewhat rough-spoken. This did not
alarm us, however, as our search was for treasure of
a different kind, which called for excavation of another,
and less obvious nature.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE OASIS OF TUNHWANG

TUNHWANG is, in the opinion of the inhabitants of 484
neighbouring cities, so gay a place as to merit the
name of 'Little Peking,' but as four days particularly 487
hard travelling separate it from Ansi, which is the
nearest town, we were warned of hardship ahead in
getting there. We were therefore advised to fill every
available bottle, to carry a sack of bread and one of
flour, and to occupy every space left, with feed for the
animals. On leaving Ansi we made a straight line [133]
for a long volcanic range which we had already sighted
on coming, and which we now followed the whole way.
The aspect of these hills was different every hour,
seeming now near, now far, and blue, purple, or silver-grey, according to the course of the sun. They were
bare of all vegetation, and scored by innumerable
watercourses, which disappeared into a gently-sloping,
barren, gravel plateau. The so-called inn, which [485]
marked each stage, was but a rude shelter inhabited by
two men, and the only water was a brackish well. The
last night was the hardest of all. The road had [135]
stretched over an expanse of salt, glittering in the star-light. We had expected a good rest when we reached 484
the inn, but on arriving were told that the fodder supply
being now nearly exhausted, there would not be enough
left for another feed, so we must leave in four hours'
time, if the mules were to have strength left to pull us
through the deep sand now lying ahead. Accordingly,
after a brief halt we started, and at 4 a.m., chilled to
the bone by the biting wind, and utterly weary for want
of sleep, we felt almost at the end of our powers. The

484 last watch before dawn dragged itself slowly ou
There was no telegraph wire to cheer us, there being
line to Tunhwang, so we were dependent for guidan
on a landmark erected at each half-stage, and which
daylight was visible for many miles. At last our cart
stopped at a tiny hut ; the men thundered on the do
until an old woman opened it, and in a few minute
crackling wood fire restored life and hope, as we sto
round it in the little hovel reeking with opium fum
Presently the old dame, seeing how perished we w
with cold, threw a handful of dried leaves into a
of boiling water, and ladled us out an infusion, in wh
restorative powers she professed the greatest belief.
may have been the herb, or the fire, or her kindness,
perhaps the combination of all three, but most certai
we were presently able to go on our way with r
strength.

It took us six hours to reach the gates of Tunhwa
and in the bitter cold of the hour before sunrise
were fortunate enough to pick up a bundle of str
dropped from a peasant's cart, to which we set lig
361 and after warming ourselves, went on invigorated.
245 round the city are large orchards of a park-like charact
watered by rushing streams, and planted with thousa
of trees, a great proportion being pear trees, for
fruit of which the place is celebrated. The early fro
had already touched the leaves, and the whole sc
776 was ablaze as with golden flames. It was the fourtee
day of the eighth moon (October 1st), the eve of
782 Moon Festival, when offerings of every description
fruit are made to that luminary, and the street st
were piled with 'moon cakes,' apples, grapes
nectarines—an attractive spectacle to us after
weary journey.

000 The geographical position of the city is such as

The geographical position of the city is such as to
render it a very important centre, standing as it does 487
where roads from Lhasa, Mongolia, India and South 494
Siberia all converge. Merchants from Khotan, Yar- 777
kand and Kashgar travel this way, and it is not infrequent to meet a caravan of sixty donkeys which have travelled fifty days over the southern border of the Takla-Makan desert. Tunhwang is a town which has, 175
under various names, taken an important place in the history of the territory now known as North-West Kansu. In 165 B.C. there is record of its inhabitants being overcome in battle, and dispersed, reappearing later as the Indo-Scythians of the Punjab. Its more ancient name was Shachow—City of the Sands—and it is frequently marked by this name, on maps, at the present time. In A.D. 400 it was the capital of the State of Western Liang. It has been held by Tibetans, and used by the Chinese as an extreme outpost of defence against the Huns. Documents in the Indian, Khoroshti and Brahmi scripts had been excavated in the district, as well as in an unknown script resembling Aramaic.

Of the original city nothing now remains but a 361
ruined wall, and an enclosure mostly cultivated by 563
market-gardeners. In its stead has grown up a smaller town, on the opposite side of the river, the eastern suburb of which has become the business quarter, and is chiefly occupied by Moslem Turkis, who are now gradually possessing themselves of the land, so that it is common to see the scarlet dress and fluttering veil of the Moslem women at work in the fields. The reason 733
for this change in the population is not far to seek, 563
opium and its deadly influences being the cause. Rich and poor, old and young, farmers, tradesmen and artisans are all neglecting their employment for the opium-pipe, and it is freely admitted that the people

733 of the place are on the downward grade, being unable
563 any more to hold their own with the Moslems, who are forbidden by the laws of their religion to indulge in this vice, and so easily get its victims into their hands. Nevertheless, the memories of past prosperity, and the present post of importance held by the Military Commander, impart a certain consciousness of self-respect to the inhabitants of Tunhwang, so that the visitor cannot fail to be impressed by the dignified bearing of the populace in this isolated spot.

563 Among our first visitors were two women from Kashgar. They were remarkably picturesque, and with splendid physique and deportment. They wore long, straight gowns of brilliant-coloured cloth, and a finely-woven veil falling below the waist, which softened the strong, handsome features, and gave them a most attractive appearance. They immediately mounted the *kang* barefoot, and it was a sight to see the face of Mrs. Liu—a model of Chinese propriety—as they slipped off their shoes, and the shapely feet were exposed. However, as they spoke Chinese fluently, she was soon in happy conversation with them. These ladies insisted that we should come that very afternoon to return their visit in their own home, and in an hour's time sent two charming children, wearing miniature Wellington boots, to escort us there. They led us safely past several ferocious dogs, through a spacious courtyard, to a living-room, where the whole family was assembled, the patriarch of the group being an Ahung, which corresponds to a Levite among the Israelites. After we had been seated for about half-an-hour, during which time they all listened attentively to the Gospel Story, a woman-servant appeared bearing a large dish of boiled lamb, the joints of which, being of the minutest size, were easily handled. The hostess,

with unimpeachable manners, lifted the joints by the knuckle-bone, and gave us each one, saying, 'You know that it is not our custom to use chopsticks.' We accordingly sat, as to the manner born, and gnawed meat from the bones, greatly enjoying the entertainment. We also were specially pleased by the vivacity of the numerous small children, who sat in a circle on the floor round the brass dish, into which their elders from time to time threw their own half-stripped bones, to be further polished.

Several hours every day were afterwards spent by us in house-to-house visiting, and by this means we came into close contact with all sorts of people. After family prayers every morning, a couple of hours were spent in meeting the requirements of various early callers, many of whom came to buy literature, and also in arranging the day's campaign. Our method of gaining an entrance into the distant farm-houses was to carry an English book, and after walking a suitable distance, sit down and read aloud in the foreign tongue. On not one single occasion did we get through a page before some woman came out, greatly interested by what was taking place, and invited us into her home.

In one house we found an old lady of seventy, trembling with excitement at the prospect of seeing us, for the news had reached her that we were preaching 'the forgiveness of sins,' a blessing for the attainment of which she had vainly devoted all the years of her life, and she was now almost blind, and with death drawing near. No sooner did we appear in the doorway than she knelt up on the *kang*, calling out to her granddaughter: 'Burn the incense! They have come!' Protest was useless, for she had heard a report of our doings, and, in her eyes, our celibacy, combined with our age and the long and fatiguing journeys which we took for the sake of preaching our religion, marked us out as women to whom reverence, not to say worship, was due, and nothing we could say could dissuade her from paying us this tribute. 'I am too feeble to get down off the *kang*,' she said, 'but come up here and sit beside me, and tell me how sin can be wiped out. I have kept all my vows, and made many pilgrimages; now tell me what more I can do?'

'You have done all this, Granny,' we replied, 'but has any of your sin been forgiven?'

'How *can* I know?' she replied, with a pathetic shake of the head; 'how *can* I know?' And this was the answer that all these earnest, sincere ascetics gave, when pressed to estimate the value of their rigid, painstaking, unremitted self-denial.

With an interest into which the whole endeavour of a lifetime was concentrated, she listened as we spoke to her of a Saviour who has taken upon Himself the sin of the world.

We returned home to find about fifty men in the inn court listening spellbound to an old gentleman who was explaining the why and wherefore of our stay in Tunhwang. We recognised in the lecturer an old schoolmaster who frequently attended our open-air meetings. He wore large horn spectacles, his queue was long and thin; and his purple-tinted silk gown was of extreme antiquity, the back glistening from many years of contact with the plait of hair. Extending a skinny hand, and pointing a long-nailed finger, he was emphasising the points of his speech. 'You know nothing about it,' he said. 'I have read all their books, and I understand their religion thoroughly. They are good people, I tell you, and the reason for their coming here is this—*The King of Europe* has sent them! It is he who meets all their expenses! Ever since the War, girls are scarce over there, and so he has appointed these persons to select brides for the young men of his household!' 0-06

At this point, first the audience, and then the lecturer, caught sight of us, and the discourse came to an abrupt close. The crowd greatly enjoyed our amusement, as well as that of the staid and sober Elder Liu, who now set to work to dispel any remaining illusions as to our authority for negotiating royal alliances!

CHAPTER XXIV

THE CAVES OF THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS

ALMOST from the day of our arrival, both gentry and scholars continually asked us the question: 'Have you ever heard of the "Caves of the Thousand Buddhas," eighteen miles from here?' and all were proportionately delighted when we told them that the fame of these works of art was world-wide. 'Then go and see for yourselves how they compare with the paintings in your own country,' they urged; but in view of the late experiences of the Harvard party we felt the situation to be a delicate one, and allowed ourselves to be a good deal pressed before signifying our intention of making Chienfutung a visit. And even then, when, after the lapse of some days, we began our arrangements, we were quite prepared to abandon them if any objection from official quarters had been raised. When the day came, however, and the animals were being harnessed, an officer made his appearance in the yard, and with great courtesy announced the fact that a military escort was to accompany us, the road being difficult and lonely; and he added, seeing we were now ready: 'Start when you like, the escort can easily overtake 484

484 you.' We had not gone very far when a mounted soldier galloped alongside. 'Ask him his honourable name,' said the senior member of the party from the recesses of the cart, 'and how many children he has.' This led on at once to a friendly conversation, and soon we were supplying the soldier with pears, and a share in the lunch we were carrying, while in return he gave us an immense amount of information, more or less reliable, 491 about the whole district. The road proved indeed difficult to find, and as, from the moment of leaving the 133 fertile land surrounding the city, until we reached 172 Chienfutung, we did not meet a single human being, we should have inevitably wasted much valuable time had we been unescorted. For some time we ploughed our way heavily through the loose sand, to emerge finally on a gravel *glacis* of uncompromising sterility. Eastward stretched a range of sandy foothills, whose outlines were always changing under the bidding of the winds, but which, tradition affirms, hide beneath them the ruins of a very early civilisation, while ancient records speak of at least two towns, at one time ruled by Mongol princes, no traces of which can now be found. The whole impression given, is that of a thickly-inhabited district overtaken by some cataclysm, which has left Tunhwang to stand alone—an island of verdure in an ocean of sand. After three hours' travelling, the coarse grit gave place to boulders, with flakes of mica glittering on the ground; then, following what seemed to be the bed of a former river, bordered by cliffs of conglomerate, rising gradually to a great height, we were led to the back of the sandhills, where unexpectedly we entered upon a green oasis planted with fine young poplar trees, some still vividly green, while others had already changed to clearest yellow. Here were the rock-temples.

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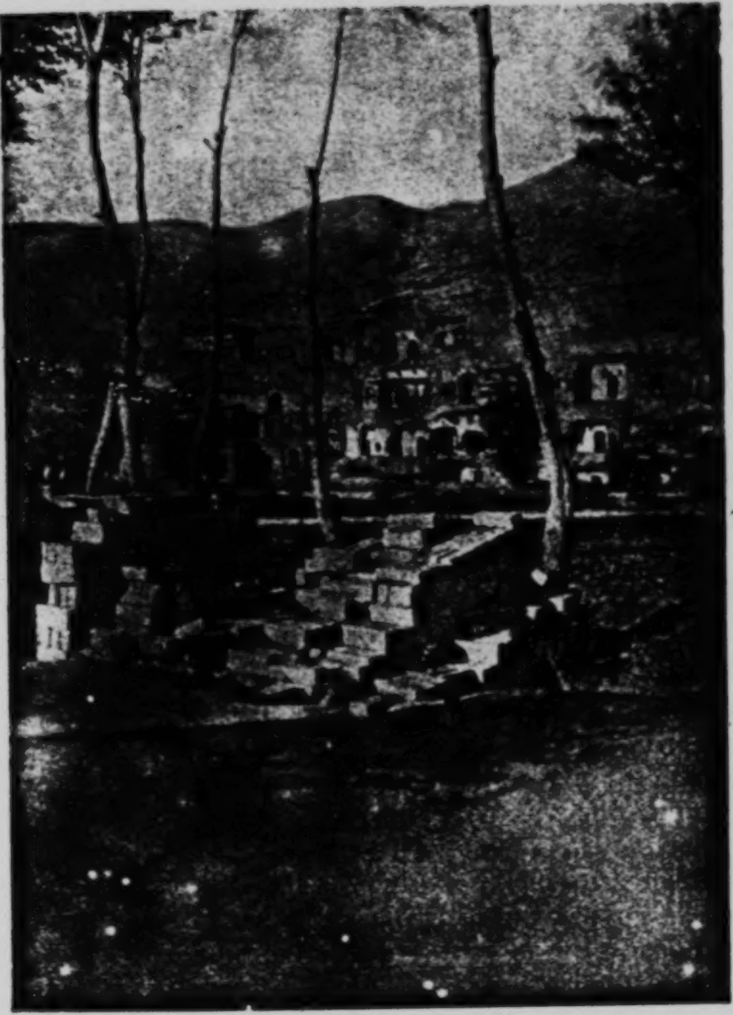

THE CAVES OF THE THOUSAND BUDDHAS.

"Many of the upper shrines have now no frontage at all, so that they can be seen from the valley below."

To face page 134.

[FACING p. 134]

172 The self-appointed guardian of the Caves of the
778 Thousand Buddhas is an interesting man, who by his
346 own unaided efforts has enormously improved the place
532 —a Taoist priest, from the Province of Hupeh, he came twenty-eight years ago on a begging pilgrimage to Chienfutung, which in those times was nothing but a barren waste with a trickling brook losing itself in the sand. Wang-tao-shi—for that is his name—soon utilised this water for irrigation; he planted all the trees with his own hands, and sowed enough crops for his maintenance and that of his acolytes. He also erected a large, commodious rest-house, containing a lofty, cool hall surrounded by sleeping-cells, all spotlessly clean; while he himself occupied one small room adjoining a tiny kitchen. In order to repair the caves he has made frequent begging expeditions, and has also from time to time received large sums in exchange for certain old manuscripts, now in the possession of various museums; but he has never enriched himself, all being spent on the upkeep of the temples. The caves have been hollowed out by hand from the almost perpendicular cliff, which they have honeycombed, and each contains some particular representation of Buddha, by whose name it is distinguished; such as, 'The Temple of the Precious Three'; 'The Hall of the Solitary Buddha'; 'The Shrine of Sakimuni.' The walls are all frescoed, and extraordinarily well-preserved owing to the dryness of the climate; and as the façade has broken away in places, many of the upper shrines have now no frontage at all, so that they can be seen from the valley below. The atmosphere is marvellously clear, and they present an exceedingly fine effect. This breaking-away has also had the advantage of letting in the brilliant daylight to the shrines, some of which would be wholly inaccessible if it were not that small doors of communi-

172 cation have been opened through a long vista of grottoes;
778 one could, therefore, wander on almost interminably.
346 The paintings cover a great period of time, some dating
back to the Han dynasty (202 B.C.–A.D. 265), others to the
532 Sung (A.D. 960–1280), and many of the best to the Tang
period (A.D. 618–905).

A good number have been covered over by more recent stencil-work, the various layers of the colouring being clearly visible where the doors have been cut through. A very usual pattern for covering the walls is made by the use of innumerable small clay medallions, which viewed from a distance seem to present a geometrical design, but which on inspection are found to consist of a draped figure of Buddha sitting in an attitude of contemplation.

Most of the large idols were in raised alcoves, sometimes approached through an ante-chapel, in which were life-sized figures in flowing garments, their heads outlined against gilt haloes, or flame-bundles. The most delightful decorations represented family scenes in Paradisaic Gardens, where dainty ladies leant over lakes, or stood on camel-back bridges, watching the birds circling round the lotus tanks, while happy children ate ambrosial fruits.

Episodes from the life of Buddha recurred in many forms, as also illustrations of the delights awaiting those who attain to the joys of the Buddhist heaven. The ceilings were not arched, as one would expect in cave-dwellings, but were cut out to a square, the sides of which sloped upwards about five feet to form a smaller square. Anyone accustomed to the Chinese measure used for grain will understand that this is the shape of an inverted '*dou.*' We saw several colossal figures nearly a hundred feet high, one of which is enclosed in a roofless hall with head open to the elements, and another

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is an unusual representation of the Buddha reclining in the final state of Nirvana. A detailed account, as well as splendid pictures of these wonderful caves, can be seen in Sir Aurel Stein's record[1] of his visit to Tunhwang in 1907, when in company with the old guardian, Wang-tao-shi, he opened up a temple containing a mass of manuscripts of priceless value. These were written not only in the Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit languages, but also in Uigur script, which is a derivative of Syriac writing, in Runic Turki, and in a peculiar form of Syriac script as employed in Manichaean writing. The variety and quantity of these manuscripts showed they must have formed part of some ancient monastic library. Specimens of hand-painted silk banners brought from Chienfutung by Sir Aurel Stein may be seen in the British Museum, and many extremely ancient and interesting records of Tunhwang find their place to-day in the King's Library of that building.

On entering one of the larger temples, we were startled by the appearance of a Figure so totally unlike those which surrounded it as immediately to rivet our attention. It was that of a man standing by a tree, the face of which wore an expression so benign, sorrowful, and strikingly human as to cause us to remark to one another that it might have been intended to represent the Lord Jesus Christ. We were therefore particularly interested, on returning to Tunhwang, when we were asked the question by the students if we had noticed that they had given our Jesus a place in their Pantheon.

At the extreme southern end the caves contained more modern work, and the terrifying grotesques of the Chinese temple came into evidence once more. Here we entered a shrine whose deity was surrounded by a banner proclaiming it to be 'The Pitiless One.' On

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[1] *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, Sir Aurel Stein.

172 either side stood an attendant, one of which was a gaunt
778 brown shape of terror sent forth to induce men to
commit suicide by taking opium. His was a dread
346 figure indeed, but not to be compared with the second,
532 which represented the female instigator of suicide, by means of cutting the throat. She carried no emblem to make her mission clear, but every line of her insinuating face and bold, compelling eye, suggested the Power of Evil, able to break down the last hesitation in the mind which contemplated this dreadful deed; and Chinese women have since told us that many a bride has cut her throat after a visit to that shrine. The consummate horror of this representation so impressed us, that we can well believe it.

788 Chienfutung habitually stands solitary, but for the visit of an occasional pilgrim, except during one week of the year, when thousands of worshippers crowd its temples, and the air is heavy with burning incense. Streams of small-footed women risk their necks on the precipitous, crumbling paths leading to the upper galleries, nor will they, in spite of the utmost fatigue, leave one single temple unvisited, lest having done so much, they should fail to conciliate that last, final deity whose malice might be incurred by neglect!

CHAPTER XXV

THE LAKE OF THE CRESCENT MOON

133 We returned to Tunhwang so enthusiastic about the
491 art treasures of 'The Hall of the Thousand Buddhas' that our visitors urged us to make a second expedition to another beauty spot of the locality, Yüehyachüan—'The Lake of the Crescent Moon.' 'Chienfutung is

the work of man, but the Crescent Lake is the work of 133
the gods,' we were told. It was only three miles from the 491
city, but proved to be so curiously located that one
might easily be only fifty yards from it and yet remain
unconscious of its existence. We were warned that the
road was heavy, so we left in good time, having harnessed our three best beasts to the small cart. An
hour's drive brought us to the foot of the sandhills
lying to the south, and then we looked right and left,
knowing that so far we had not missed our way, yet
being quite unable to determine in which direction we
should continue.

Finally we turned to the right, when almost immediately our shaft-mule had a bad accident. Failing to disentangle her feet from the soft ground she was pulled over by the two others, falling on her head with nose and mouth completely buried in the loose sand. A yell from the driver brought our second man to the rescue, and they were fortunately able to lift the poor creature up before she was completely smothered. Meanwhile Elder Liu, who had been made responsible for the enterprise, went on ahead, climbing a sand-dune about three hundred feet high. A signal from him, and we proceeded to follow, undertaking one of the most difficult of ascents, as at every step we sank well above the ankles, and finally were obliged to take off our
shoes and climb in stockinged feet. When we reached 133
the upper ridge, still we saw nothing beyond the vast
expanse of sandhills, but one step more and below, in 137
the narrow space dividing us from the next hill, lay a most exquisite miniature landscape—a small, crescent-shaped lake, in colour a sapphire-blue, while owing to a strange optical effect, the sand slopes around took on a wonderfully soft, mother-of-pearl iridescence. Behind the lake and opposite to us stood a small temple and

133 137 rest-house in the midst of a group of trees, the whole picture being reflected in the water, wherein numbers of little black ducks with white beaks disported themselves, dipping and reappearing continually. The little divers found the current to be so strong, that as soon as they reached the western extremity they rose above the water and trusted to their wings for the return journey rather than battle against the stream.

133 823 778 There is another curious phenomenon,[1] the facts of which we were able to test. We were told to slide down the sandhill propelling ourselves by movements of our hands. This we found to be a very simple and effective way of descent, as the whole warm dry surface moved with us. At a certain point a loud, clear, vibrating sound responded to our movements, resembling the twang of a mighty musical instrument, which sound seemed to proceed from the very centre of the hill.

Another name for the locality is 'The Door of Thunder,' from the extraordinary sounds that sometimes are heard, when the whole valley echoes and re-echoes with a noise like that of rolling drums, and when the sand, moved by the vibration, starts rolling, and continues to roll for hours on end. It is most amazing that this little lake and its surrounding temples should not long ago have been buried under the sandhills. Certain it is that, however fierce the wind, it always carries the sand away from the surface of the water; were it otherwise one windy season must be enough to alter the whole aspect of the scene.

'The Side Door of Paradise' is a name frequently used by Buddhist pilgrims when speaking of this lake. Only a few hundred yards from the rest-house is a sand-choked depression, with temple buildings almost wholly submerged by drifting sand, and here was formerly a sheet of water as clear as that of the Crescent

[1] [At the Lake of the Crescent Moon --Analyst]

Lake itself. Its purity was offended by the act of two 133
women, who determined to force an entrance to 823
Paradise by the crystal gate of these pure waters. 778
Throwing aside their garments they plunged beneath the surface and were never seen again, but the lake immediately receded and allowed the shifting dune to cover it !

The popular idea of buried buildings and great subterranean caverns, which account for all these mysterious effects, are probably correct, nor is it surprising that many tales are related to account for them. The whole neighbourhood is full of interest, and some day, doubtless, will be called upon to give up its secrets to scientific excavators.

Just when we were leaving the rest-house, a lama 100
came towards us, having travelled barefoot from the sacred mountain of Shansi, prostrating himself at every few steps. It was near sunset ; his red and yellow robes were soiled, and he himself weary and travel-stained, so that he was now calling in at this temple for a night's shelter. We stopped and spoke to him, and then all sat down by the wayside to talk.

'From what Province do you come, lama ?' we enquired.

'From Utai Mountain, in Shansi,' he answered, 'and the road is long ; it has taken me six months to reach here.'

'And where are you going ?'

'To Lhasa, through those mountains,' waving his hand in the direction of the Southern Hills.

'What is the purpose of your pilgrimage ?'

'To fulfil a vow made many years ago.'

We handed him a copy of St. John's Gospel, in which he at once read aloud the opening words : '*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and* *the Word was God.'* The happy expression used in the translation gripped him at once, and he listened with profound attention while we preached unto him Jesus.

His face lit up.

'I know about this,' he said. 'This Jesus, of whom you speak, has been greatly troubling me lately in my dreams. I know I shall *have* to believe in him!'

So we parted; the lama to pursue his journey to Lhasa, and we to turn our faces towards Suchow, from which place we had been absent about two months.

Some days later, when we were once more nearing the region of Chikinpu, where we had lost our books, the mules of our cart took fright and bolted over some very rough ground; the driver was knocked down and Elder Liu was thrown out, falling senseless by the roadside. When the animals were brought to a standstill and we were able to reach the Elder, we found him unconscious and bleeding freely from severe cuts. With the greatest difficulty ~~he was hoisted on~~ to a mattress and placed in the large cart, where he was able to lie at full length, and we proceeded on our way. Presently the wind veered, and we were soon overtaken by a blizzard, while the necessary delay caused us not to reach our stage until after dark, when every inn was full. We wandered to and fro looking for a shelter, but even the temple door was locked and we were at our wits' end when a kindly man invited us into his house; his wife having recognised in Mrs. Liu's speech the tongue spoken in a distant town of ~~which she herself~~ was a native, whereupon our welcome was assured. Her husband was a butcher, but little we cared that carcases of his victims hung about our room. Luxury is a matter of relativity, and that night we experienced it when we gathered round a brazier of burning thorns and feasted on tea and dry bread.

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Only those who have crossed Gobi roads can possibly understand the thrill and excitement of the traveller when the first tower of Kiayükwan comes in sight, about three miles before the town is reached. Drivers and passengers always raise a shout of delight at the prospect of once more passing the portal of China. In spite of the fatigues and dangers of the way we were back again, and the thought of the simple comforts awaiting us, as well as the prospect of seeing friends, was so pleasant that we responded hilariously to the greetings of guard and populace which met us at the entrance of the fortress.

CHAPTER XXVI

GATHERING CLOUDS

THERE was now in Suchow a group of Christians to welcome us on our return, and a larger number who came regularly to Sunday service and associated themselves with us. The first to profess belief was a woman, wife of a tinsmith, who some years ago received into her house two men sent on an evangelistic tour by the Kanchow Church. Her husband was interested to sit and talk to the two preachers on many subjects, but it was the wife who sat quietly to one side, giving her full attention to the Gospel which they proclaimed, and from the time of our arrival she took her stand courageously as a Christian. Another was a woman from 'Kow Wai.' She was of Moslem parentage but married to a Chinese merchant, who brought her to Suchow, left her there, and returned to Hunan, since when she never saw him again, and from being a rich woman she came to know poverty. She was sixty years

770 of age, tall, handsome, strong of body and independent of mind. She walked into our courtyard on the first Sunday we were in Suchow and heard us speak of the Saviour we were there to preach, whereupon she turned to the crowd of women, saying: 'Every word of this is true.' From that day she never missed attending service, and helped us in every way she could.

As has been already recorded, the first night in Suchow was spent at an inn which was very cold and uncomfortable, and we could not remain there. The landlord was a tall ex-soldier of a Shantung regiment, and although we left his inn, he came to see us in our new quarters and was extremely friendly. A few weeks later his wife brought the little baby with her to Sunday service, then returned home, and before night the child was dead. Instead of yielding to terror and superstition she asked her husband's leave to come and stay with the women-students for a few days, for they talked with her of Christ, and this comforted her.

A Moslem merchant was also among those who believed, and his gentle little wife very gradually, but surely, yielded to the faith which recommended itself by the change it had wrought in her husband's treatment of her.

798 We commenced the winter term of the Bible School under apparently auspicious circumstances, yet those who were leaders in the work were profoundly conscious of a persistent premonition, pointing to impending trouble. The crowds were greater than ever, and praise of the Christian community, its kindness and philanthropy, was heard on all sides. The victories already won, however, were not to be allowed to pass unchallenged. The hostility of those spiritual forces which had met us, on the threshold of the Temple Courts of Hell with a sneering query: '*What? So you have*

come too,' was gathering impetus for a more organised 798
attack than any to which the Christian community
had hitherto been exposed. Severe financial loss was
incurred through the death of mules, horses, sheep and
cows, in which live stock the Church funds were invested.
One of the most valued Christian leaders was at
death's door with rheumatic fever, and hope of his
restoration was almost abandoned. He, however,
slowly recovered, but when barely convalescent,
received news that his two cousins who had but recently
left us on a visit to Honan, were murdered by brigands
on the road. A few weeks later came a letter, telling
of a robber-band attack on his home, and the capture of
the head of the house. A large ransom was demanded
for his release, and the whole clan impoverished itself
to raise the money, yet when this was handed over, they
merely received the information that his body would be
found in a certain well, and so it proved to be.

There had, moreover, been trouble lately in Kan- 249
chow, which clearly showed us the active opposition of 798
enemies. The Kanchow Christian farmers had not sown 651
any opium, and so many had registered as enquirers
as to cause a positive difficulty to the Local Official in 624
the raising of the twenty-four-thousand-dollar opium
tax, at which sum the crop under his control had been
assessed. These wheat-growing farmers did not place
themselves in a position of financial advantage, as the
value of the opium crop, even allowing for the tax, was
almost five times that produced by grain. As friction 798
increased, the local tax-gatherer determined to wreak
vengeance on the whole Christian community, and thus 624
the plan of revenge was laid with a craft and subtlety
such as is difficult for the Westerner to grasp. An old
man, seventy years of age, so poor as to be nearly
starving, was secretly approached with the offer of

798 money, a few days of feasting, and the promise of generous sacrifices after death, in exchange for the risk 629 he should run of losing his life in an organised mêlée at the time of a coming fair. After some bargaining the matter was settled, and the tax-collector proceeded to secure the services of certain young roughs, always ready for a fight. The compact, however, was not kept as wholly secret as the parties intended, for some young girls overheard the conversation, and subsequently repeated it to their friends. On the morning of the fair a band of Christian men and women were selling books near the theatrical stage, when the tax-gatherer's gang began to pick a quarrel with them concerning the offence offered to the gods by their preaching. In a moment others joined in, and there were hot words and hard blows on both sides. Benches were used as weapons, and shortly afterwards the old beggar was lying dead, while the Christians were falsely accused of having killed him! It so happened that the more important Christian farmers were detained that day at a village three miles distant, but in a few hours' time a squad of soldiers arrived from Kanchow and took prisoner twenty Christian men, including even those who could prove an *alibi*. For weeks they lay in prison, without trial or proper investigation, wholly dependent for food on the charity of the Christian community, and not until one of them died, as a result of neglected wounds, was release on bail obtained for the remainder, the official refusing even to coffin the dead man until his old mother made her wrongs known by sitting the whole day wailing, in Eastern fashion, in the Yamen court, while the birthday festivities of the Mandarin were in progress! The facts of the story gradually became known, but no trial was held, and the accused were left in the supremely unsatisfactory condition of

being refused all opportunity for clearing themselves, 798
although the whole populace declared them to be 624
innocent. Dr. Kao was actually with us at distant
Suchow when the incident occurred. Subsequently, 798
however, he made an open enemy of the Kanchow
Official by peremptorily refusing to consider the case on
a suggested compromise basis, *i.e.* that as a life had
been sacrificed on either side, and honour was satisfied,
it only remained for the parties concerned to seal their
agreement by feasting !

The circle of those bound together to wreak vengeance on the Christians and their leader was growing, and they were now joined by an influential man of whom Dr. Kao had made an enemy by refusing his donation of several hundred dollars towards the hospital work, a gift which had been offered on the tacit understanding that having accepted it the doctor would cease his open denunciation of the opium traffic.

During the winter months of 1925 the Provinces of 635
the North-West Frontier were placed under the juris- 701
diction of Marshal Feng, and the city walls were
covered with excellent proclamations, forbidding soldiers
to oppress the people, and promising adequate protec-
tion to farmers bringing in their produce, it being the
custom of the local battalions to ill-treat persons and
seize goods at their pleasure. These proclamations
were received with acclamation by the people, but were
obviously *not* liked by the officials or the soldiers.

One day in January 1926, Dr. Kao, walking along the street, met a crowd running towards a back alley, where on following them, he found five men beating a young villager so severely as to endanger his life. Several of the assailants were soldiers, and one, armed with a hammer, was proceeding to break the youth's skull when, without a moment's hesitation, the Doctor

635 flung himself on the victim so as to receive the blows on 701 his own body. This so startled the assailants that they desisted ; he then took possession of a young soldier's cap, for purposes of identification, saying, 'This is a matter for judicial investigation. If this boy has done anything wrong, take him to the Mandarin.' This the soldiers refused to consider, and followed the Doctor to the Mission House, finally begging him to drop the matter, and not to report them to their officers. To this he consented. A few days later our own carter was sent out to a village near by to bring in grain for the mules. A band of soldiers, acting in accordance with their irregular custom, commandeered the cart and animals for their own use. The carter questioned their right, whereupon he was beaten, and filth of the worst description was rubbed into the wound. The soldiers then moved away, leaving him semi-conscious by the roadside, to which place our small scouts soon fetched some of the students, as well as Dr. Kao, who indignantly called attention to General Feng's placard above his head. This happened close to the residence of the Minister of Defence, who, hearing what had occurred, came out himself and saw the man still lying wounded near his own gate. He ordered the offender to be brought before him, whereupon one of his own soldiers was produced, and by his order was stripped of his uniform and handed over to the civil authorities for punishment. The Commanding Officer was likewise degraded, and the Minister himself called at the Mission Compound to apologise for the insult offered, expressing himself as exceedingly angry that we, who were his friends, should have been exposed to a public insult. Meanwhile, the carter developed a severe form of blood-poisoning, and his life was despaired of ; and in the civil prison lay the soldier, whose life was to be taken

the same hour as the carter died—a life for a life, while 635
the local garrison was most indignant at the suggestion 701
that one of their number should be executed on such a trivial charge as the death of a common carter, and swore vengeance. However, after forty-eight hours of extreme anxiety, our relief knew no bounds when a slight improvement, following on a severe operation, showed itself in the patient, and he eventually recovered, the two lives being saved, as the soldier was released.

The New Year festivities were at this juncture in
full swing, and the friendliness on all sides was such that 798
we greatly hoped the ill-feeling produced by this incident had passed over. Our guest-rooms were daily crowded with visitors, and the tent would barely hold the congregation which gathered each evening.

It came like a bolt from the blue when one day Dr. Kao walked into our sitting-room with the startling announcement:

'The compound is surrounded by men sent to arrest me!'

'To arrest you!' we exclaimed. 'Impossible! On what plea?'

'I am accused,' he quietly said, 'of leading an armed mob to break open the city gaol in order to release a certain Moslem prisoner. The man, as we all know, has been living in his own home for months, nor have I been inside their prison. The accusation is futile, but the power of the accusers is tremendous; and chief among them is the Governor of the prison himself, *the master of the little slave whose foot I amputated*." Then, showing a visiting-card, he added: 'This card has just reached me from the Judge, who is a patient of mine, and who asks for a visit from me. I know he never sent it, and it is but a trap to get me quietly into the Yamen and arrest me there, for they fear a hubbub among the

798 people. I expect you agree with me ; I had better go ;
and so I just came in to say good-bye. Our life and
635 death are in God's hands, as also the reputation of His
701 Church. He will vindicate His Name.'

Commending each other to the care of God we parted, and he proceeded in company with Mr. Chang to the Yamen. As the two men left the house and walked down the streets, knots of Yamen runners, who had been placed at various points from which they watched the doors of the compound, closed in behind them, so that, as they reached the Yamen gate, they were completely surrounded by soldiers. As they entered the courtyard, the Civil Magistrate appeared, who shouted angrily: 'Seize that fellow Kao!' Immediately a dozen hands took hold of him, and thrust him into the Black Hole of the inner prison, reserved only for condemned criminals.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE STORM

798 Dr. Kao's arrest took place on February 17th, 1926,
and it was June 1st of the same year before he left
697 Suchow for Lanchow, to be present at the enquiry into
his case. For forty-two days he was incarcerated in the Black Hole, which is an inner apartment of the prison, without any window ; it contains, however, a small aperture in the roof to admit a little air and light. The cell was so unspeakably filthy that the Doctor's first request was for some quicklime to scatter on the floor and under the boards of the *kang*, on account of the numerous rats, and other even worse vermin. The only door was the one by which the gaoler entered,

and in it was a small grating through which the food 798
could be passed. Next to this was the gaoler's own
room, and beyond that again was another cell, in 697
which twenty prisoners were incarcerated, most of them heavily ironed ; this room, too, was in almost total darkness. None of all those wretched prisoners were permitted to leave their cells except for a few minutes once in twenty-four hours, and all were entirely dependent upon their relatives or friends for their food ; consequently death from starvation was all too frequent, while, according to Dr. Kao's own account, the nights were made hideous by the agonised cries and groans of these most miserable of men.

For some days after the arrest we suffered intense 798
anxiety from the fact that no message whatever could reach us direct from the Doctor ; moreover, persistent rumours were afloat that he was to be shot. Of course he was regularly supplied with food from the Mission Compound, but we had no certain means of knowing whether he really did receive it or not. Those first days of suspense were, indeed, terrible. The Civil Magistrate, it must be explained, had secured to the accusation brought by him against the Doctor the signatures of the two other most important officials of the city, each one thereby declaring himself personally cognisant of the offence. Consequently, when the answer ultimately came from the provincial capital of Lanchow, it was couched in these terms : 'Since you affirm Kao to be guilty of breaking open the prison of Suchow with an armed mob, you may inflict the extreme penalty of the law ; but if later investigations should prove him to be innocent, you will personally be held responsible for your action.' The three officials then pronounced themselves prepared to take this responsibility ; but did so as a means of currying favour with the local garrison,

798 in the secret hope that the ever-shifting sands of the political hour-glass would produce new conditions, capable of manipulation, if needs be, to cover over such an insignificant incident as that of the execution of a Christian leader. They were strengthened in this expectation by reports of successful demonstrations by the anti-Christian organisations in large cities.

To us the reply from Lanchow seemed to hand over the situation to our enemies; nevertheless, prayer was constantly made by the whole Christian community to God for Dr. Kao, and we waited for the answer to come.

798 By the law of China, it is the Civil Magistrate who
pronounces the sentence upon the prisoner; never-
692 theless, it cannot be carried into execution without the additional authority of the District Judge; therefore, when this Official was approached and asked to ratify the sentence upon Dr. Kao, he very indignantly replied: 'I refuse to condemn a man whom we all know to be innocent. Every child in the Suchow streets knows that the prison door has never been forced, nor has any prisoner there been unofficially released.' And from this position no persuasion moved him, although he was perfectly aware that such opposition might ruin his magisterial career. We, on our side, at Dr. Kao's request, refrained from any kind of interference or interposition, with the exception that we duly informed our Lanchow friends of all the facts, urging them, if possible, to use their influence to secure an impartial enquiry, which must necessarily be held by officials other than the local authorities. As a result of this appeal, a telegram was presently received from Lanchow, ordering the case to stand over until the arrival of a Special Commissioner appointed for the examination. The natural effect of this communication, following on the action taken by the District Judge, caused some degree

798
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of trepidation in official circles, one result of which being that it immediately secured for Dr. Kao the privilege of receiving visitors, ourselves among the number. We always found him cheery and serene, although the sanitary conditions were so bad that they told seriously on his health, so much so, that when at last he emerged into the open day, he fell to the ground overpowered by the effect of the light. Many a time did we remind each other that although he had not broken open the city gaol and released its prisoners, we were yet all at that very hour seeking to preach liberty to the captives held in the strongholds of the Power of Evil.

It was with a peculiar sense of triumph that we brought the news to the prison, one Sunday afternoon, of the first baptismal service in Suchow having taken place that day.

The turnkey was increasingly friendly to his genial, though intractable prisoner, and when the doors were closed for the night, allowed him to leave his cell and preach to the other captives. The accusation was hanging on the evidence of one witness, namely that of the Governor of the gaol, and owner of the little slave-girl mentioned in a previous chapter. He was a man of weak and shallow nature, to whom cruelty of any kind partook of the nature of an amusement. He had bought over several witnesses, but when they heard the rumour of an investigation by a Commissioner appointed from Lanchow, they backed out and declared that only fear of torture had led them to give evidence. He began to realise, when it was too late, that each of the other officials had left himself a possible loophole of escape, which, if acted upon, would leave the whole burden of the responsibility upon his own head. Surreptitiously, therefore, he began to make preparations for a hasty exit into Turkestan; but this being prevented by his

798 superior, it soon became the city talk, that whereas
formerly he looked like a man, now his face resembled
692 that of a terrified ghost.

Meanwhile the Commissioner from Lanchow arrived,
and only made himself known after spending several
days *incognito* in an inn, under the guise of a merchant.
He easily satisfied himself that the accusation brought
against Dr. Kao was without any foundation, and he
collected witness from every tradesman in the vicinity
of the prison, to the effect that the gaol had never been
798 attacked at all. He personally visited the prison court,
and noticed that this cell now bore a new red paper
692 notice stating that : ' This room is to be called a House
697 of Detention.' This was a ruse by the Civil Magistrate,
to justify himself for having placed an untried prisoner
in a condemned cell.

Before returning to Lanchow, the Commissioner insisted upon immediate removal to the real ' House of Detention,' where was a sunny courtyard, surrounded by decent rooms, each containing only one occupant. Here, Dr. Kao soon resumed his normal appearance ; he was allowed to shave and keep his hair cut ; visitors came freely, and things in general were decidedly better. All the same, it was still a prison, and many of his neighbours had lived there for years, awaiting a trial that never came ; fed from their homes by little slave-girls sent in with their meals, and who slipped their slender bodies between the thick wooden bars of the locked entrance gate, with basins of rice for their masters' dinner. Some of these men had settled to a dull apathetic endurance of a wrong that could not be righted, many found a solace in the deadening fumes of opium, but there were a few who abandoned themselves to such a frenzy of despair that within a few months they were released by death from the hands of their enemies.

One or two there were who vowed to know no rest until 692
this system of bribery and corruption should be over- 647
turned, which made it possible to incarcerate innocent 798
men, sometimes for life, without trial and without
appeal.

Kansu was at this time in a political ferment. Some 701
months previously General Feng's troops had assumed 635
authority in Lanchow, and were gradually making their power felt throughout the province. His appointment of his own men to positions of importance caused the greatest excitement and apprehension among the local authorities, and the city walls were posted with the announcement that anyone spreading reports on political or military matters would be shot.

The first we saw of Marshal Feng's officers was one Sunday morning at the early Communion Service, when two finely-grown, well-set-up soldiers, in spotless uniform, walked in, taking their place among the little group of believers, thus openly associating themselves with Christianity. They only stayed a few days, however, but were soon followed by recruiting officers, and lecturers, who addressed themselves to the populace and preached equality and the rights of the proletariat, and when the city walls were covered with anti-British posters. It was all very chaotic. But the recruiting fell off, because the people said, 'Under Feng you *must* fight, so what's the use of his good pay if you die?' Then the posters quietly disappeared, but the authorities left ours up intact—one did not know what to expect! At last an officer appeared, sent by Feng, under whose superintendence the city was entirely transformed in only a few weeks. The main streets were widened and levelled; a market-place was erected where the peasants might sell their goods unmolested; industrial institutions were opened for the poor children, and other

701 public works set on foot for the unemployed. Suchow
635 was transformed! But still Dr. Kao's imprisonment
dragged on.

798 Finally, on June 1st, the trial of our patience came to
694 an end. A student arrived in our court at dawn, saying
that Dr. Kao was under orders to leave that morning for
635 Lanchow, there to stand his trial. In spite of final
701 delays and procrastinations, that same afternoon he left
on foot for the eighteen days' tramp to the provincial capital. Here he spent some months, during the greater part of which he was able to live with his own friends. When the trial finally took place, he was declared innocent, and acquitted on all charges.

Many had been the orders and counter-orders, the subterfuge, and the conflicting motives at work, under the shifty régime of Chinese officialdom. On his release General Feng appointed him to the position of Medical Officer in charge of Red Cross work at his own Military Hospital, and his return to the far North-West has been temporarily delayed.

PART THREE

ACROSS THE GOBI DESERT

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GOBI EXPRESS—THREE MILES AN HOUR

000 WE bade Dr. Kao 'farewell and God-speed' at the Temple of the Spring of Wine, and stood for a few moments in silence watching as he and his mounted guard disappeared in a cloud of dust on the Lanchow road, and then turned back to face an important question. The time when we must visit England for a period of furlough could not be far distant, and for some weeks our minds had been greatly exercised by news from home which called for our speedy return. A telegram had come telling of sickness and death in the immediate family of one of us. The strain of the last months had been greatly increased by the realisation that the Mandarin clique, which had leagued itself to oppose the Christian Church, had power to prevent us from communication with the outer world. Our letters were censored, while every manner of difficulty was placed in the way when we attempted to communicate by telegram with our home friends. Urgent as was this call, no move on our part could be even considered so long as our fellow-worker lay in the Suchow prison, but now that he was certain of a public trial in the

000 provincial capital, our continued presence in Suchow was of no further assistance to him.

Of the various routes by which we might reach England, that which would take us through Central China seemed the most precarious, as the armies of the War Lords were now on the move, and were preparing to besiege Sian. The route which would take us through Kashgar, Osh and by the Trans-Caspian Railway was temporarily unfeasible, and there would have been barely time to attempt the Karakorum Pass before the early snows made it impassable. For several years it had been our cherished plan to take a missionary journey across Central Asia, following one of the ancient trade-routes, and preaching the Gospel at every stage of the way. This now seemed to be the time for carrying the plan into execution.

487 After much deliberation, we decided on a route which would take us via Kiayükwan, Yümen and Ansi to the Turkestan border at Hsinghsinghsia; then across the desert to Hami; through the Pass of the Tian Shan Range at Tsikioking, and so to Kucheng and Urumchi; and from thence by a road still leading north-west, through Manas to Tsuguchak. From Chinese travellers we had learnt that we might expect to cross the Russian border at Kuswun, proceed to Lake Zaisan, and there board a Russian river steamer which would take us up the Irtish to Omsk, where finally we could join the Trans-Siberian Railway. We were also informed that if we arrived at Lake Zaisan later than the end of September, the last steamer of the season would have left.

Many had been the Chinese and Turki travellers with
600 whom we had talked during the past three years,
questioning them concerning the ancient trade-routes
of Central Asia. The reports were so varied, however,
and the calculations of the distances covered and the

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
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length of time required to accomplish the journey differed so widely, that in the end we reached the firm conclusion that there was one only way by which to ascertain the truth, and that was to do the journey ourselves! A near neighbour of ours was a native woman of Khotan, the city which supplies the rough jade which, when it has passed through the hands of a Peking craftsman, has a world-wide reputation. Her appearance was striking. Her dark skin, gentle, full-orbed eyes, and general demeanour made her a conspicuous figure among the Chinese women, although she spoke their language freely.

'It took me four months to get here,' she said; 'the stages are very long, and often one can get no water to drink!' Her eyes then filled with tears, and she said: 'You and I are both strangers here; we know the loneliness of being so far from our own people!'

A fellow-prisoner of Dr. Kao's told us that he had travelled between Hankow and Kashgar by every route available. Through Ili he had touched Russia, and taken the Trans-Siberian to Peking. To him no journey seemed difficult, and the glowing account he gave us of Kashgar, with its Consular buildings, foreign houses, wide streets, and incomparable restaurants were such as would lure any unwary traveller across desert wastes only to view them! 'The miles,' said he, 'are long until you reach Hami, but beyond that they shorten considerably, and I have often ridden 170 li a day!'

One turbaned Turki had travelled to Stambul and Mecca, by which feat he gained the privilege of calling from the Mosque minaret, and in answer to our enquiries he said: 'It's a long, long way to Urumchi. Do not reckon on doing that part of the journey under sixty days.'

000 One of our students had crossed the Gobi to buy a stock of the medicinal plants which grow in the oases. He strongly recommended us to take the journey as he had done. 'Cheap and easy,' was his comment; 'I joined the camel drivers, and took it slowly. For twenty taels I rode their beasts, slept in their tents, and they fed me for over two months.'

'You may spend a lot of money in hiring carts and buying mules,' said one old wiseacre, 'but believe me the best way to travel is with a string of small donkeys. They eat little, are quick on their feet, and if some die the loss is insignificant.'

Some of our lady friends, the wives of officials had travelled these roads, and their comment generally was: 'We get into the carts at sunset, and know nothing until we reach our inn the next day'—a statement which we easily believed, knowing as we did that the opium tray is always served to official parties [494] as the mules are being harnessed. Upon two points, however, all agreed, namely, that when travelling at 492 midsummer, all stages must be taken by night, and that mules are preferable to horses, as the latter suffer severely from drinking the medicinal waters of the desert.

Having therefore duly listened to all possible expert advice obtainable from the Asian tribesmen who incessantly roam from end to end of that vast country, we proceeded to make our preparations for the expedition in accordance with their instructions, beginning by asking the help of friendly innkeepers in the important matter of securing suitable animals. It is a common occurrence for carters to find themselves short of money on their long journeys, and therefore to dispose of both carts, horses or mules in Suchow so as to raise sufficient funds, but a great many of the beasts offered were such

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miserable specimens as to be refused out of hand by 492
the Deacon-in-Charge, without even referring the matter to us. Some owners, however, being very persistent, it soon became necessary for us personally to put in an appearance, to view the lame, blind, aged, bony and sore-backed creatures which presently paraded the compound court in a long, melancholy procession. Some of the worst specimens, however, wore splendid harness and finely-wrought saddles, borrowed for the occasion; but we were not to be taken in by such childish deceptions! Having ourselves already had some experience both in selling as well as in buying, we remained quite unimpressed by the flashily-groomed beast which clattered down the road, urged to a gallop by the owner, who declared himself in despair at having to part with the 'finest mule that Shensi has yet produced,' but which, stripped of its trappings, generally stood revealed as antique and emaciated, and with flanks heaving with exhaustion consequent on such an unusual effort. Nevertheless, one by one, we steadily added to our teams, until nine mules were comfortably champing side by side in the stable. Two large strong 494
carts were next bought and then carefully overhauled in view of the heavy strain ahead. Our own small Peking cart which had already done valiant service was destined to carry us and our bedding, for though this conveyance made no provision for a possible lie-down at night, we yet chose it on account of the easier movement it afforded than the rolling and lurching of the larger vehicles, each of which, covered with matting and lined with felts, and with wheels studded with protruding iron nails, could carry a load of two thousand pounds.

Naturally enough, such preparations needed a con- 436
siderable supply of ready money, which from the

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436 beginning of our life in the North-West had depended on the selling of our cheques to Chinese merchants, who, on their side, seeing that highway robbery was frequent, were glad to hand us over large sums in cash. As was always the case, just when we were needing money a traveller arrived, so that we had no difficulty in securing the amount required. The Chinese business manager of the compound also saw to it that we gained a small percentage on the transaction, while he made himself responsible to see that we were not cheated by the introduction of inferior coins, as is too often done, in the following manner. The Mexican dollar bears on it the effigy of Yüan Shih Kai, the first President of the Chinese Republic, but who died in the fourth year of his Presidency ; the coins having been carried on to a further date, are inscribed as of the seventh, eighth, and even ninth year of the Presidency of the said Yüan Shih Kai. The unfortunate populace, however, painfully experienced in being made the loser by every manipulation of the money-market, and realising the likelihood of being duped once again (for how could a dead man issue a currency ?) steadily refused to accept any coins dated after his death, so that at every transaction each dollar must now be scrutinised, while everyone dated beyond the third year of Yüan Shih Kai bears a depreciated value.

000 Our time for preparation was brief. A few boxes always stood in readiness to receive our personal possessions, it being necessary to pack everything up whenever we left Suchow for more than a few days, our room being poorly protected against robbers, and our movements always uncertain owing to the perpetual political ferment of the country. Wearing, as we always did, the Chinese dress, we needed only to take our complete summer wardrobe of black sateen trousers, blue cotton

coats, black silk skirt, and stitched-cotton hat as protection from the sun. But a good supply of shoes was needed in view of long tramps, and these were made for us in velvet, with a thick stitched-cotton sole, by good sewing-women, such as are easy to find in any town of China. Provision for cold nights, or change in the seasons, was made by the purchase of a soft, warm lamb's-skin coat. Moreover, among our most valued possessions were the few utensils for kitchen use, two saucepans, a cake-tin, and a couple of jugs, also a tiny cooking-stove consisting of a small oven on four legs which had been brought to Kansu forty years previously by Miss Annie Taylor, the Tibetan pioneer missionary. These last were carefully crated, and then committed to the care of the Chinese Missionaries who were to remain behind in charge of Suchow. One of the carts was also entirely devoted to the transport of the Gospels, tracts and posters needed for the expedition, all of which had reached us by book-post from the coast, and on the sale of which we depended largely for our daily needs. The conveyance of money presents much practical difficulty to every traveller in China, paper money being only of value in the city where it is issued. The Mexican dollar already mentioned is in itself both bulky and weighty, and so is the copper coin which is advantageous on account of the different rates of silver to copper exchange existing between one city and another; a string of carts therefore will sometimes carry coppers as sole cargo, cash being so heavy that a man can barely carry on his shoulders the value of one pound sterling. Our cartload of books consequently represented a sum of money sufficient to buy the daily food of the party for a considerable time. 0-00
4-36

As the day of departure drew near, our grinding-stone was busy from dawn till dark converting the wheat 0-00 bought at the previous harvest into flour, and incidentally supplying bran for our mules. The many-storied cooking-steamer was filled again and again with small rolls which we should carry with us in sacks, while the mules were used to convey loads of beans and dried peas from distant villages, where they could be bought cheaply. Although it was early June and the weather was very hot, the first fruit, which is the apricot, was not yet ripe, and vegetables were still scarce. We knew, however, that lean days lay ahead, so we bought all that we could carry of radishes, green onions, green celery leaves, and chervil. A few pounds of the good Turkestan sultanas and dried apricots were bought from the Turfan merchant, who spread his cloth each morning by the roadside, and on it displayed his goods.

The caravan, including ourselves, students and carters, numbered eleven persons. We purposed to travel slowly, leaving the main road at several points in order to touch important oases to north and south, and we carried a tent to provide a vantage-ground for preaching, as well as sleeping accommodation for the men of the party

In spite of the tension and strain of the past few months, the whole community nobly threw itself into preparation for the projected campaign with ardour and enthusiasm, fully realising that we were at last to carry into effect that which had been the subject of so much prayer in the whole Church of Kanchow from its earliest days.

By Dr. Kao's arrangement, Elder and Mrs. Liu, Deacon Chang and another Christian couple, assumed responsibility for the work in Suchow, where, with the help and support of the local Christians, the Church was being more firmly established.

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE ONWARD TREK

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On previous expeditions our young cook, 'Welcome Home,' had driven our cart, but this time the difficulties and fatigues which lay ahead required our selecting an older man, and one inured to every form of hardship. Knowing that he must quit our service when we left for furlough, the young *chef*, however, had allowed his imagination to be captured by visions of the martial glory to be afterwards won under the banner of General Feng's Christian Army.

The walls of Suchow were then posted with notices to the effect that young men of steady character and able to produce suitable guarantees of good conduct, would be given the opportunity of a military career combined with educational advantages, besides liberal pay, on joining the forces of Marshal Feng. Recruiting officers took up their residence in an inn of the east suburb, where the following scene was described to us by a looker-on. Dressed in a clean white cotton suit, his face flushed with excitement, young 'Welcome Home' presented himself, and stood at attention before the recruiting sergeant:

'I hear that you want recruits. Is this a Christian corps?'

'It is,' was the immediate answer.

'You speak of general education, but do you allow time for Bible study?'

'We do,' said the sergeant.

'Then write down my name, sir,' said 'Welcome Home'; which was forthwith done.

'If your references are good we shall accept you in ten days' time. During that period you may withdraw if you wish, but if you present yourself then, you are enrolled

702 as a soldier, and afterwards, leaving will be desertion.'

'I am in the employ of the Lady Missionaries. They are quitting the country soon, but I must stay with them as long as they need me.'

'That is quite right,' said the sergeant. 'Go back and talk it over with them, and,' he added, 'if there are any more young Christian men in the Church who want to enlist, tell them to come along, they are the kind of men we want.'

'Welcome Home,' who had sallied forth with the bearing of a simple young farmer, returned to us an hour later with the deportment, gestures and style of an accomplished orderly. He greeted us from the back of the breakfast table with a military salute, and clicked his heels whenever we spoke to him. The joy of realising he was to be one of Feng's men endued him with an enthusiasm that transformed him. At the appointed time we released him to fulfil his engagement, and three days later, as we were driving to a farewell luncheon party, we passed the drill-ground where recruits were learning the goose-step. 'Welcome Home' caught sight of us, turned his head and smiled rapturously, whereupon the corporal's iron hand smote him on the shoulder, and he stood once more at attention. The next day he called in company with a 'centurion,' who informed us that there was every prospect of our late cook quickly securing a commission. 'In this army,' he said, 'we are like one big family, and we look to Marshal Feng as children to a father.'

351 The last few days were busy with meeting social claims. Various members of the Christian circle begged us to take one more meal with them before we left. The ladies of our landlord's family entertained us in the summer-house of a flower-garden. It was the season when the fragrant tree-peony is in bloom, and

we strolled between the flower-beds listening to singing 351
birds, which, alas ! were in cages concealed among the
branches of the trees. The arrangement of the garden
was highly skilful and artificial. In one place a
miniature mountain showed tiny paths connecting
shrines and temples, all built to scale, while the whole
was watered by the ramifications of a sparkling little
stream, on the banks of which stood diminutive men,
women and children—the whole happy-family scene
conveying the impression of a life spent in Elysian
fields, which no disturbing element could touch. A good 351
deal of the verdure in the flower-beds was supplied by 262
asparagus plants, known to the Chinese as 'Dragon's
Beard,' which seems to be indigenous to Kansu, but [824]
which, strange to say, the people do not care to eat. [137]
Many are the bitter weeds, leaves and buds which the
Chinese cleverly convert into palatable food, but the
delights of asparagus have not yet been discovered by
them, and it is distressing to a Westerner to see the
shoots allowed to go to leaf without ever being cut.

The meal served to us was of the usual kind, commencing 262
with dessert and *hors d'œuvres*, and proceeding
to chicken, fish, birds' nest soup, and sweet
rice ; then reverting to sharks' fins, seaweed, and
apricot-kernel syrup ; ending with plain boiled rice,
rolls, and several basins of vegetable soups with meat
balls, while on this occasion a seasonable dainty was
provided in the shape of light fritters, made from the
petals of the tree-peony. As we were by now on a
footing of intimate friendship with these ladies, the
social intercourse and delightful food thus prepared for
us made a pleasant interlude coming between the
exacting claims of the last days.

Late one evening a Suchow man of our acquaintance, 521
Mr. Li by name, called, bringing with him a gentleman /72

52 whom he introduced as a friend travelling from Urumchi to Lanchow. Pending the moment when he should 172 declare the object of his visit, we engaged on a conversation which, starting with enquiries regarding our respective ages, family circumstances, and the reason of our living in Suchow, led on to the cost of living, the local money exchange, and various other topics of interest. After some time thus spent, the stranger drew from his pocket an object wrapped in a cloth which he unfolded, and produced a petrified egg, asking if we were interested in such things. Mr. Li explained that he could not expect travellers of our experience to marvel at a mere egg, but the man said : 'Eggs of this kind are scarce, and some foreigners give big prices for them.'

'Where did you find it ?' we asked.

'It was picked up in the Gobi Desert.'

'What are you going to do with it ?' we enquired.

Mr. Li bent forward and explained *sotto voce* : 'The egg is greatly coveted by a powerful Official, and this merchant has had to leave Turkestan on that account. He is willing to part with it, but says its price is one hundred pounds.' Both men looked questioningly at us, but the offer elicited no response, so the owner of the egg shook it vigorously, whereupon a slight gurgle was heard, and his eyes glittered with delight.

'He says that is a jewel rattling inside,' explained Mr. Li.

Our advice was that he should take his treasure to Lanchow, and show it to a famous Swedish archaeologist who was living there.

'He can tell you all about it,' we said : then, with unpardonable stupidity, added, 'Whatever happens, do not let it get broken !'

He thanked us, exchanged some more polite words, and Mr. Li then revealed the main object of the visit by asking if he might leave the precious egg with us for the night, as his friend was afraid of losing it.

The next day he fetched it away and we saw him no more, but some time later news reached us that, unable to restrain his curiosity, he had broken it open but failed to find the jewel within!

11th June, 1926, was the day decided on for our departure. Our explicit orders had been that all three carts must be completely packed by the evening of the 10th, as we should leave at daybreak on the 11th. For days past everyone had worked ceaselessly, yet the sunset of the last day saw various small jobs inevitably held over until the next morning. The nine mules were only brought back newly-shod from the farrier's after dark. Had we been so inexperienced as to question why this important job should be left to the last afternoon, the answer would have been: 'Had anything occurred to delay your departure, the shoes at present in use would have lasted another three weeks, and what a lot of money we should have saved you!'

On the 11th we all rose at 4 a.m. in order to start before the great heat began. We drank a single cup of tea, after which the kettle, teapot and cups were packed into the food-basket and stowed away in the recesses of the cart. Men ran hither and thither; neighbours came in to say last farewells, while a crowd of our beloved children ran in and out to report generally on the progress made. It was, however, midday before our carts left the compound, yet had we suggested the possibility of dinner, there must have been a further delay, so we suppressed our desire for food, and made a start. Never had our carts been so heavily laden, and as each fresh bundle appeared, the crowd of bystanders sighed, announcing openly that no mules could possibly accomplish what was expected of ours! There was always *one* voice uplifted, however, to assure the others that ' the beasts of the Christians are *always* well fed, and their strength therefore in proportion.' Our own comfort lay in the fact that each day would see the load of books and food steadily diminish.

As we made our way to the North Gate the whole city was wishing us *bon voyage*. Deacon Chang, with a group of men, walked with us, and we were also preceded by a cartful of women friends escorting us for the first few miles. In the shade of a poplar grove three miles from the city stood a tall figure, sobbing. It was the Moslem woman who on our first Sunday in Suchow had declared, ' Every word that they say is true,' and who was the first of the city to go down into the waters of baptism. We sat with her for a few minutes under the trees, and then went our way leaving her still sobbing by the roadside. Behind us followed the pathetic figure of the little deaf and dumb beggar girl. She saw that we were leaving, but we had no means of making her understand that this time we were not coming back again. She followed us on and on, so far, that at last we were obliged to compel her to return ; yet still she stood and waved her tiny stick and little beggar's bag until we passed out of sight.

None perhaps so well as the Missionary is able to realise the strength of the spiritual ties which bind men and women together irrespective of race, class or nationality. Great as are the joys which arise from such supernatural relationships, they help to create also for the Missionary, circumstances which constitute a constant strain upon the emotions and sympathies. Whichever way he moves, some torn root is bleeding, whether it be in leaving spiritual children in the land of his adoption, or in parting from parents, friends or children in the homeland. The Missionary's is a pilgrim life, nor can he ever know the security of a normal environment 000 until he find it in the 'City that hath the foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.'

As Deacon Chang turned away with tears in his eyes, we knew that he shrank from the responsibilities which must now rest upon him in quite a different way when we were gone, but from the day of our arrival in Kanchow it had been clearly understood by all, that our visit would end with the completion of our immediate task, nor could there be any question of an indefinite prolongation of our sojourn, even though the growing Church might need, and also desire, a similar period of help from the foreign Missionary in the future.

At the hour of leaving there are always hands extended beseeching you to stay, and voices to declare that you were never so much needed as at this hour. It is only too easy at these moments to fall victim to the illusion that the holding together of the members of the Church is the work of man, and to miss the basic fact that the Life-Source which alone will fitly knit them together is the Holy Spirit of God ; nor has this power ever been delegated to any human being.

CHAPTER XXX

A FAIR IN AN OASIS

THE whole territory stretching from the gate of 494 Kiayükwan to the frontier of Siberia is known by the Chinese as Kow Wai—'Without the Mouth.' To the Chinese it carries the impression of enforced exile, as though the land of China had spued an unwanted national from her mouth. The thought of a journey in 'Kow Wai' suggests terrors to the heart of every

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang AF1~~

494 Chinese. It was perhaps owing to this that one of our three carters sent a relative on the eve of our departure to inform us that his '*Mama* was not well, and he would be needed at home.' The substitute was a Christian youth who undertook to do his best for us, but by the close of the first day it became evident that he was not adequate to his job. The handling of a team of obstinate Chinese mules requires a knowledge of animal psychology such as can only be acquired by living as an animal with your animals for all the years of your own psychological development. The mules are harnessed without reins, and are almost entirely driven by word of mouth. One sound means 'Water ahead,' another, 'Keep to the right,' a third 'Your foot is in the traces, wait till I get you free.' A fourth conveys the following information: 'You villain! If you do that again, when we get to the inn to-night I shall kill you, and spend a merry night eating your flesh boiled and fried!' Our young man's psychology was insufficient.

The problem at once presented itself as to where a driver could be found to take on his post, for the road is no place to pick up carters of sufficient responsibility to be trusted, as they must be, with the handling of goods and grain. At the first inn, however, was a decent man known to some of our party, who was transporting a band of his womenfolk to the town of Yümen. Modes of transit had utterly failed him, and there he was, unable to move, spending money which he did not own. He had sent home for help, but the days were going by and no one appeared. He could come with us, but for the women and children for whom he was responsible.

As we were discussing the situation, in walked two youths with a few donkeys. It was the rescue party, which after such long delays had at last arrived to fetch the women. With gratitude, accordingly, our

new acquaintance took over our job, and the same 494
evening we proceeded on our way. The coincidence of events which released him at the very moment when we required his services, and also put lucrative work in his hands, so impressed him as to make him exclaim at frequent intervals: 'Ai ya! That was a strange bit of luck! We shall get on all right on *this* journey. Fortune favours these Christians!'

Our direct route lay from south-east to north-west, but some important oases lay direct north and south of the main road, and we were determined to visit these very isolated localities, even though we were warned that in so doing we should add considerably to our fatigue.

Our first détour, then, was to Chikinpu, a little 543
castellated fortress-town, where we were met with the news that every person had gone into the country to attend a famous annual fair and theatrical performance, in a temple five miles distant. Fairs and theatres are the preacher's opportunity, so we said we would go a-fairing too! It was a long stage under the midday sun before we reached the Temple of the Red Hill, where we sat by the roadside until the big carts lumbering behind overtook us. When travelling, our personal luggage was wrapped in a length of waterproof canvas, and on such occasions as this we were able by means of three sticks to transform it into a tiny tent, which provided a shelter in the shadow of which we spread our bedding. The spot was very attractive, for it supplied a bubbling spring, and near by there was a field of celandines on which to rest our sun-scorched eyes. We were now only a few miles from the lower ranges of the Tibetan hills, on which patches of shade were thrown by the passing clouds. To the back of us was a red sandstone cliff, which gave its name of Hung Shan to the temple. Farms were dotted over the landscape, each of which

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang AL 1~~

543 was entertaining a large number of visitors for the days of the fair. In the early morning bullock-carts full of women dressed in green, red, blue and purple wended their way across the plain, together with hundreds of small donkeys, ridden by young girls or children, two or three of whom would sit, one behind the other, adroitly guiding the little creature by means of a single rope fastened to its bridle.

OTD The preaching-tent, from which we proclaimed our Message, was crowded from early morning until late afternoon, and thousands of books were eagerly bought. We were becoming well known in Kow Wai, and many greeted us as old friends. The grinning face of the wily carter who had taken us to Kinta—Golden Tower—was one of the first to appear! He now completely disregarded the fact that at our last parting he had shamelessly handed us over to the tender mercies of an incompetent youth with only a bullock-cart, caring nothing for the agreement he had solemnly entered on, when once his illicit goods were safely delivered, but advanced with the utmost cordiality and friendliness. 'Why! Miss French and Miss Cable! who would have thought of seeing *you* here? Where *do* you not go with your tent?' Addressing the crowd he explained, 'These are old friends of mine. They stayed in my home last year. You must listen to their preaching. It is all true,' and with a patronising gesture he produced a copper, saying, 'I would like to buy a book for this small boy, my sister's son.' With a parting nod he added, 'Hope the sales are good?'

The nights *à la belle étoile* were delightful, the only disadvantage being that no undressing was possible, so we drew out our wadded quilts, and lay down covered with a rug, to awake at sunrise and find some ploughmen with bovine eyes gazing wonderingly at us. One afternoon a storm blew up, and a woman from a poor little farm situated a quarter of a mile away came to offer us the hospitality of her home.

'I have been talking to my husband,' she said, 'and we both think that if it should rain in the night you would find this meadow turn into a swamp. I have a little second room in my house which we can clear for you. Come up and see it.'

We went with her and found a farmhouse consisting of one general room for sleeping, cooking and living purposes, but with a tiny outhouse which would be used by a man to watch the grain on the threshing-floor. This she prepared for us, and then entertained us with the best that her home could afford. Not knowing her name, we always referred to this woman as 'Lydia,' in remembrance of another woman who on a former occasion offered hospitality to missionaries.

Very early one morning as we sat in the celandine meadow, a man came toward us, squatted on his heels and entered into conversation. He had a refined face and expressive features. He told us that he was a leading actor in the troupe performing at the temple. 'You don't know me,' he said, 'but I have seen you many times and in various places distributing your tracts among the women of the audience. One of our men died last night, and we have just buried him over there,' indicating the direction with his chin. 'He was ill for three days and we carried him here, but we did not know he was dying until yesterday afternoon. He was in great pain, and we took it in turns to stay with him during the performance. The poor boy was only twenty years old, and his home was nearly 5000 *li* away. We have written to his people, but it is uncertain if the letter will reach them. I did not want to join my companions after the funeral, so I walked over to see you.'

543 Our meals were somewhat of a problem in this happy
265 valley.[1] Each party brought its own picnic-basket, and
the food-vendors only supplied titbits such as lumps of
fat fried pork, apricot tea, and fermented rice-water.
000 Our bag of bread was already finished, and the only
food our men could make was flour mixed with oil,
pulled out into long strips, nipped into small chunks,
and boiled in water, and this meal we shared with them
once a day, but still found ourselves craving for some
form of bread. We were greatly delighted, therefore,
when a little girl appeared with a home-steamed
roll in her hand, and said: 'I have no money,
but will you give me a gospel in exchange for this?'
Finding that we were willing to do so, bread and new-laid
eggs were afterwards frequently brought by
children.

In spite of considerable forethought we had left Suchow for this long trip with a but poorly furnished store-box. Months before, we had written in several directions for needed supplies, but owing to the disturbed condition of China, all had failed us, and we were thankful to have enough tea in hand to allow ourselves a fresh brew once a day. Of the certainty of our daily ration we had no question, but beyond this many luxuries were supplied through the kindness of casual acquaintances. The old guardian at the Temple of the Red Hill, after we had sat and talked awhile with him, brought us back through his garden, and cut the best of his vegetables for us, while 'Lydia' also came down with a present of rice steamed with jujube fruit. On one occasion a resourceful student went out foraging for food and brought us back a dozen new-laid pheasants' eggs.

311 To the direct north lay a place called Hwahaitz, an
extensive oasis covered with large farms. Since our

000 [1] [Near Chikinpu at a fair—Analyst]

first arrival in Suchow we had heard constant mention 490 of this place, and had made many enquiries how best to reach it. It was very difficult to locate, and seemed to be two or three days' journey from every other oasis in the neighbourhood. We had the conviction that difficult though it might be, Hwahaitz must be visited by the preaching band. One of the Suchow enquirers superintended a business which had a branch in that place. Travelling through Kiayükwan we had unexpectedly met this man riding along the road, and told him of our determination. His instant reply was: 'I have just left there on my way to Suchow, but I will now turn back. You will find me waiting for you at Hwahaitz any time you get there. Fit it in as you can.'

At the close of a long day of preaching we cooked and ate a meal, then rolled up our tents, packed our carts, and left the grassy glades for the stony Gobi. A group of our new friends came to see us off, and among them was 'Lydia,' who had spent the afternoon in our company, sitting with a group of women teaching them the only text she knew: 'Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.'

The sun was setting when we crossed the main road, 491 which would have taken us on our legitimate stage, and 133 turned off due north into a region of bare volcanic hills without a sign of life. Even the single telegraph wire, as we left it behind us, had a friendly and alluring aspect. The moon was but a few days old, and soon abandoned us in a district more weird than anything we had previously seen, and we threaded our way by a path often scarcely wide enough for our cart wheels, and between high volcanic ranges of terrifying outline, from whose sides boulders had constantly fallen, blocking the narrow roadway. Once our front mule

49 shied in terror at something none of us could see, but 33 which the carter found to be the carcase of a camel. For hours we progressed in this valley[1] of desolation, and about 2 a.m. emerged into a small patch of watered 844 land, where a few families cultivated melons. We do 312 not like these watered lands in the darkness. Deep ditches are dug in all directions to convey the stream of water, sometimes to one part of the land, and sometimes to another. In and out of the dry ditches the cart bumped and stuck, whilst the animals strained at the high banks. Often the ditch was full of water, and this was worse, as through these rivers of uncertain depths the cart must go, and the experience is nerve-racking.

Before long, the barking of fierce dogs (another of the night-terrors) was heard, and our driver stood behind his mules preparing his whip for a possible fight. The farmer, however, was friendly and hospitable. The young men of the household got up, chained the dogs, and gave us the freedom of the threshing-floor for the night, where we slept in our carts. Early in the morning we gathered the people together, and to their great delight held a gospel service with singing accompanied by the harmonium.

When we left, our hostess gave us a basketful of oil-buns—dough rolled into thin cakes and fried in linseed-oil—and we proceeded on our way, still chasing the elusive Hwahaitz. In three minutes we had left the [135] watered land and were once more in Gobi. A group of 136 five magnificent black vultures caught our attention. They were so huge and so statuesque in outline that it was not until our young men had used the field-glasses that they were convinced these were really living creatures and not a group of rocks. The head was quite bald, and the movement in walking resembled the

[1] [Between Chikinpu and Hwahaitz--Analyst]

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang AI 1~~

waddling of a small bear, but in flight they were 136
superb.

It was not until after sunset that we drew near the 800
first farm of the Hwahaitz oasis. The Suchow enquirer came out to meet us, and we found a room prepared for our use. The *kang* had been covered with a length of white cloth; a kitchen with firewood was at our disposal, and a meal was being prepared. But we were too tired to sit up and eat it, and securing a cup of tea, we lay down and promptly fell asleep.

We were up early, but not before the crowd had begun to assemble in the courtyard. After a breakfast of pancakes made of flour into which oil had been kneaded, and which we dipped into vinegar, we went out to see the place. The gates of the walled enclosure in which we were staying were already decorated with Christian posters, and the students were out choosing a suitable site for the tent.

The name of the place signifies 'The Flowery Lake.' 133
The lake, however, after which it is named, proved to be 361
but a small pond in which naked children disported 241
themselves, and where the beasts of the local farmers
were brought to be watered. 312
The oasis is circular, large, and extremely fertile. The roads were bordered with poplar and willow trees, and the fields were sown with wheat, millet and flax. We followed the high bank of an irrigation canal, and passed the entrances of several large, prosperous and beautiful farmhouses.
The locality is very hot by day, but exceedingly cold at [132]
night; at sunset the air hummed with mosquitoes, [136]
which, however, only lived a couple of hours before succumbing to the night chill.

We returned to find the site chosen, and the tent 000
pitched. Larger crowds gathered even than at Chikinpu, and the sales of gospels were most remarkable.

[illegible] The days spent there were very hot and tiring, but eminently worth while.

CHAPTER XXXI

JADE GATE TO ANSI

491 To get away from Hwahaitz proved a more arduous business than reaching it had been, and fifty miles of the dreary Gobi still stretched between us and the town of Yümen—Jade Gate—which was our next objective. [312] In the whole of these fifty miles there was only one spot where water was obtainable, and this was merely a brackish spring near to a hut in which lived an old couple. We left Hwahaitz at 4 p.m. on a very hot day, but after sunset it turned bitterly cold. At 2 a.m. we reached the hut, where, having rolled ourselves in a coverlet, we lay down on the sand, but by 4 a.m. the wearisome spectacle of the sun staring at us over the rim of the world, fetched us reluctantly back to our wanderings. By 3 p.m. we joyfully sighted the distinctive tower of Jade Gate, and a more exhausted, travel-worn party seldom entered its portals, but as this was our third visit to Yümen there were plenty of friends to greet us. The gay little town was now looking its best, the opium fields were in bud, the wheat was green, while the freshness of early summer was still upon the foliage. We spent some days in the city, and discovered that a few changes had taken place since our 634 last visit. The Mandarin, with whose wife we had been friendly, had left, and his successor had modernised the entrance of the Yamen. A decoration of crossed flags ornamented the main entrance, over which a clock face was painted, the hands pointing as usual to

the hour at which the midday meal is served. In 634
place of the customary fresco of the tiger endeavouring to seize the sun in its jaws, which symbolises the covetousness of the man who seeks to devour his neighbour's goods, the wall was frescoed with the 'Map of China's Shame,' showing China and her dependencies, with prominent scarlet patches indicating those portions which have been seized by foreign powers, and a similar map was exhibited in all the towns we visited in North-West China.

The business men, with whom we were friendly, 702
seeing the group of students with us, at once seriously
warned us of the trouble we might certainly expect in 167
attempting to cross the Turkestan border with them. We learnt that young men were constantly impressed at that point, and afterwards were neither allowed to continue their journey nor to turn back, as the Governor of Sinkiang was raising an army of defence, and was conscripting every man who passed that way. They consequently earnestly begged us not to risk such complications as might ensue on the attempt to take our fellow-workers with us into Turkestan. Needless to say, the students themselves, keen, enthusiastic, and ready as they were to face every emergency, felt quite confident that all would turn out well, but our wider experience caused us to spend many anxious moments as we faced this new contingency. Our attention was also drawn to the fact that the Turki merchants, who usually travelled in large numbers up and down the road, were no longer to be seen, since, by the Governor's regulation, no man from Sinkiang could enter China, neither could one from Kansu pass into Sinkiang.

For many years the atmosphere of China had been so 600
constantly disturbed by rumours, that if we had paid much attention to them our work must have come to a

000 standstill, since 'He that regardeth the wind shall not sow.' Accustomed as we were to discounting street talk, a strong instinct yet told us that, this time, we were up against a real danger in the matter of the Sinkiang frontier, and though for the moment we said no more to the young men, we deeply desired to be given a clear indication to guide us.

Some days later, when we were in the town of Santaokow, Mr. Tu suddenly complained of severe pain, and in a few hours it was evident that he was in for a sharp attack of appendicitis. We did what was possible to alleviate his terrible sufferings, but for forty-eight hours we had no idea which way the illness would turn, and our anxiety was extreme. After this time, however, his condition improved, but it was clear to the whole party that it would be madness to attempt a desert journey with a man in this condition, so finally it was decided to send him back to Suchow, escorted by two of the students. It was very pathetic to see the disappointment of the men, but when we ourselves actually reached the frontier we then realised from what a truly terrible fate this incident in all probability saved them, and at least they had had all the satisfaction of completing the preaching tour to the cities within the Kansu border. Those who remained with us were older men, and would, we knew, be regarded as our necessary personal escort.

435 From Yümen to Ansi we were travelling over
579 familiar ground, and at every stage of the way there was always some friend to greet us. We also tried to stay at the same inns as on previous visits, for the Chinese are warmhearted towards those who are known to them, and all the small resources of the inn were at once placed at our disposal on the ground that we were old friends, and sometimes our stay in the

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang M-1~~

house had proved to bring a blessing, so we were 485
welcomed accordingly. On one occasion, to our joy 572
the innkeeper's wife assured us that she had never
once touched the opium-pipe since our last visit, for we 000
had told her distinctly that this *must* go if she would serve God. Then, too, the stages seemed easier, from the fact of their familiarity, as we now knew when to look out for a deserted city, or a clump of trees, or a rushing stream, or a sandy waste. We passed with even more wonder than formerly the site of the buried city of Pulungki, and marvelled once again that so extensive a town could have been recaptured by the Gobi till from being a busy habitation of men it had become the haunt of wolves.

There is a certain ancient river-bed a few miles out 313
from Santaokow, which must hold some considerable underground water supply, since groves of fine trees border it, among which was a large-leafed willow growing to the size and shape of an English oak. The villagers had also effected an arboreal experiment there which was new to us, for we saw large plantations of young willows grafted with poplar, and they told us that by this means they produced a very useful tree, having the quick-growing properties of the willow together with the superior wood of the poplar.

As on former occasions our journeys were taken by 484
night, but being midsummer the hours of darkness were brief, and we had the benefit of a long evening as well as of an early dawn, which enabled us to take more
note of our surroundings. Ansi seemed more deeply [361]
submerged in the encroaching sands than even before. [132]
One more winter of sandstorms had passed over it, and its population bore the impress of yet another winter of opium indulgence. Our inn rooms seemed more than usually gloomy and filthy, while over the

484 *kang*, scratched by a nail in the grime of the wall, were the following lines:

> 'To-day we came to Ansichow;
> Midday to morn onward we go;
> All through the night carters' oil-bottles flow;
> Heat, hunger, thirst, cold I now truly know;
> The mere sight of a cart makes my courage sink low!'

This gloomy poem referred, we knew only too well, to the next stage of the journey, spoken of by the carters as a 'thirty-mile march which, with luck might be accomplished in eighteen hours.' On the opposite wall some homesick traveller had also written:

> 'Tho' a man travels far, yet his heart bides at home,
> 'Tis the prospect of wealth that still urges him on.
> But he looks for home joys when his hardships are past,
> And his wife's well-trimmed lamp guides his feet back
> at last.'

484 From Ansi we entered on a period of twelve brackish
312 water stages, and with this in view we bought some gourds as water-bottles, in addition to the aluminium flasks we always used for our personal supply, as well as a large zinc can given us by a Turki friend. There
[244] was still no fruit to be had, but cucumbers were plentiful.
[563] The Turki bakers, who formerly supplied us with excellent bread, had vanished. They were unable any
[480] longer to travel freely, and preferred returning to their
252 own people in Turkestan. We, however, laid in good stocks of *kwo kwei*, so familiar to every traveller in Kansu. These are round loaves of bread, two inches thick, measuring two feet across, and are baked on a circular iron plate covered with an iron lid, beneath and above which straw is burnt, while the heat of the smouldering embers suffices to cook the loaf.

000 A few days were enough for rest and provisioning, and for the small repairs needed by the carts, then once

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang-A1.1~~

more we prepared to enter on a stage which was completely new to us, and which we were warned held difficulties greater than any which we had already faced.

CHAPTER XXXII

VIEWING BLACK GOBI

EACH afternoon of our stay at Ansi we wandered out 33
through the North Gate to a little bridge which spanned the irrigation canal, and looked over the limitless expanse of grey grit mixed with small black pebbles, across which the next stage of the journey must be taken. This was Black Gobi, a plain so windswept as to have lost its sandy surface, which has been carried away by the gales and deposited elsewhere. When the hour of our departure arrived and our carts rolled out by that same North Gate, leaving behind us the last city of Kansu, we knew that we must prepare ourselves for a series of arduous stages, and that we should not see another walled town until we reached Hami. It was 5.30 p.m. when we left the inn, and though we had tried to make it an easy day, the number of callers had added to the inevitable fatigue of repacking, and we were weary before we started. As soon as we were 494
out of the oasis we realised that the black, gritty surface was not as resisting as we had hoped, and the cart-wheels dragged heavily from the first.

Three miles from the town gate we passed a temple, 778
and as was our custom got down from the carts in order to visit it, as well as the priest in charge. To our surprise we found the door fastened from within by a heavy stone, and were unable to get an answer to our knocking and calling. Our carters refused to be balked

778 by a disobliging priest, and between them succeeded in dislodging the boulder. We entered a spacious and well-kept temple-court containing a well, by the side of which stood a bucket and well-rope. We passed from shrine to shrine without discovering any sign of life, but a few moments later a call from one of the men brought us to a little outhouse, where we found the guardian lying on his *kang* in the grip of raging fever, too weak to move, and being quite alone, had no means whatever of communication with the city. All that our men could do was to draw a bucket of water, which with a few loaves of bread we left within his reach, and later on, when we passed the postman, we sent a message back to the Ansi postmaster telling him of the priest's predicament, and begging for help to be sent.

133 We travelled all the night, and dawn found us at a
494 landmark where a few arid mounds broke the landscape.
The place was called Siyaotz—'Four Caves'—the
491 name indicating four caverns which had been hollowed in the hillside, such as might serve to save a traveller's life in the event of high winds or blizzards. There was no point in delaying here more than a few moments to breathe the animals, which were already showing signs of fatigue, although we had accomplished little more than half our stage. But there is no possibility of delay on these hard marches, for the energy produced by the last feed soon ebbs, and consequently the Gobi roads are all marked by the bleaching bones of mules and camels, abandoned by their owners when too exhausted to keep up with the caravan.

The second half of the journey was now made doubly hard by the burning rays of the sun, added to which the grit was looser than before, so that after each short pull of twenty steps the flagging animals would stand still, needing to be urged again and again to make fresh

efforts. The road here was also quite deserted, as the 494
rigid policy of the Governor had closed it to travellers, 421
and the caravans which normally move up and down
this trade-route had vanished. Once, however, we 133
passed a pedestrian, who begged us, as though asking for gold, that we would grant him a drink of water, which of course we did, and afterwards at 10 a.m., thrown across the line of cart-ruts, we came upon the body of another man. A low stick supporting a little bundle of sheepskin threw a patch of shade over his head and served as a signal to passers-by. At first it was not evident if he were dead or alive, but one of the men raised him by the shoulders, whereupon he opened his eyes and murmured, ' A drink of water and I am your slave for life ! ' We held a cup to his lips, and when he had drunk he somewhat revived, and begging for more, repeated, ' Your slave for life ! ' We were still many miles from our destination, and our head carter called us aside. ' The man is dying,' he said ; ' he is too weak to walk ; we can spare neither water nor time. We must press on or we shall lose our mules.' The Christian men were desirous to help, but they also reminded us that if we took him on with us he might die, and thereby involve us in certain complications.

' Nothing will induce us to leave a dying man to his fate ! ' was our answer ; and then seeing that the poor fellow was unable even to stand on his feet, we made room for him in the front of our own cart, while we took it in turns to walk so that the load need not be increased.

At 1.30 p.m. our mules sighted a few blades of green 312
grass, and realising that water was at hand, Molly first 485
gave the signal, lifting her head with a loud neigh ! Every beast then summoned its dwindling store of energy, and a few minutes later we pulled into the inn court. The innkeeper at once took our sick man to

312 485 his own room and cared for him, and the subsequent doings of the day for the remainder of the party are best described in the words of the diary, written at the time: 'Ate, slept, got up, and ate again; then back to bed for the night.'

312 241 The oasis of Petuntz—'White Tower'—formed a green patch in the arid surroundings. A delightful-looking stream gushed from the cliff and ran into a tiny canal which watered a patch of wheat and a small field of the opium-poppy in full bloom, which raised in us the hope for vegetables, but we found the water to be too alkaline to permit their growth. This property of the water we had, however, already discovered for ourselves, for our first instinct on arrival had been to run to the crystal spring and drink deeply from it; it was, however, a most disappointing experiment, so that here we had to take our first lesson in self-control as regards drinking, for the advice of experienced travellers is: 'Where the water is brackish, drink the least possible, as the more you drink the more parched will be your mouth!' It was now we learnt the bitter lesson that that delicious beverage known to us as 'tea' became in these places only a noxious infusion of tannin which left our lips dry, cracked and black. We found the only palatable way of dealing with desert water was to boil dough-strings in it, the flour and water absorbing the salts. We also, as well as all other caravans, carried certain drugs to administer to the mules as required, serious illness being frequently caused by their inability to assimilate the unaccustomed qualities of the water, human beings, however, as well as beasts who spend long periods in these parts, become at length accustomed to it, and cease to notice its bitterness.

494 The life of the few families forming these settlements

is dreary beyond words. The visit of a traveller is 494
their only touch with the outer world, and though in
ordinary times and at certain seasons the caravans pass
to and fro in large numbers, yet there are many months
of wintry weather when there is scarcely a human being
on the road. No wonder, then, that their[1] most valued 733
possession is the harvest reaped from the field of opium,
which supplies them with their sole luxury of life.
Here, as in every other place, we visited each family, sat 570
with them, talked with them, proclaimed Christ as
Saviour and King, and on leaving saw to it that each
family had now some Christian literature, which we
hoped would be read during the long and dreary Gobi
winter days and nights. Also before we left Petuntz
we had an interesting interview with the man whose
life we had saved. We found him to be only twenty-eight
years of age, a native of Hangchow in Shensi,
very well educated, and also that he had with him
sufficient money for all his expenses, having come to
' Kow Wai ' hoping to secure a good post. His gratitude
to our party knew no bounds, and the villagers kept
reiterating to him how lucky he was to have been picked
up, as during these weeks when the roads were almost
deserted, already several pedestrians had been found
dead from thirst.

We left at sunset for the next stage, which was to 133
Hungliuyüan—' The Park of Tamarisks '—a charming 491
though deceptive name, and we reached it over
ground which by night could have been mistaken for
snowfields, the alkali deposit lying in a thick crust
on the surface and making it soft and spongy. There 361
were only four souls in Hungliuyüan, namely, one man
employed as courier by the post-office, and a woman and
her two sons. Of the three inns, two had been 485
abandoned by their owners, who found they could make

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[1] [Residents of Petuntz--Analyst]

485 no profit under the present conditions.[1] A petition had been addressed by the innkeepers to the Governor, bringing to his notice the fact that unless they were granted a sufficient government subsidy, they, too, would return to the city, in which case the road would become impassable to travellers, there being no one left to collect the necessary fuel for their use, nor anyone to keep the well clear of sand. 133 491 In this locality we were among low, bare hills of a dark and threatening appearance. They were formed of a rock of a deep purple colour, their surface being covered with loose fragments which were constantly breaking away under the influence of the weather, and the ridges presented a sharp, spiked outline. We observed also traces of a greenish granite, while in places the ground was covered with small pieces of white porphyry which looked as though a slight snowstorm had fallen.

491 494 Our next stopping-place was Tachüan—'Great Spring'—and from thence we came on to Malienking—'The Iris Well.' We here had been overtaken by a party of travellers from the province of Honan, an official hurrying to Kuche on the Kashgar road, to take over the seals of office from a Mandarin who was seriously ill. For several days we kept together, greatly to our advantage, as Mr. Yüan had excellent animals and was travelling very light, so that at each stage he got ahead of us and kindly gave warning of our arrival, with instructions that a room should be swept for us and fodder prepared for the animals. 000 On several occasions this courteous gentleman slept in his cart in order that we might have the use of the only guest-room, and each day he and his suite joined us at family worship (his tall Moslem carter standing on the fringe of the little group, signifying his approval as we read the Scriptures), all reverently bowing in prayer

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[1] [Restricted travel, see p. 187--Analyst]

when we asked for protection from the dangers of the road, as they recognised instinctively that: 'Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah.' 6-vt

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It was great joy at one small oasis[1] to be greeted by an old friend, a man who had registered his name in Ansi as an enquirer. He had been appointed as inspector of the poles which carry the single telegraph wire across this part of the desert, the gales so constantly uprooting them that the whole route is divided into sections, each of which is placed in the charge of a responsible man whose business it is to keep them in repair. At a further stage of the journey where the work was not so well arranged, we often found the poles lying flat, our mules' feet being in danger from the entangled coils upon the ground. The line of the trade-route is indicated by this single telegraph wire, which often seems to the despairing traveller the only assurance he has of human things not seen—men, families, cities, and the normal objects of life.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE RAVINE OF BABOONS

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At Iris Well we were only thirty long miles from Hsinghsinghsia, the military frontier station of Turkestan. We were anxious to arrive by daylight as we had reason to anticipate delay, and we hoped that twenty-four hours would be sufficient for transacting all business relating to passports and permits; it was a great relief, therefore, to see the clouds gathering, which meant the promise of a cool day. Taking advantage of this we hurried up all our preparations, and left in good time. At midday we reached the frontier proper—a waterless

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[1] [Near Malienking-- Analyst]

486 site but marked by a shrine flanked with two high
[13] poles. A stake roughly carved to suggest the form of a
[778] man was driven into the ground, and its rounded knob
was thick with the oil which generations of carters have
poured over it as a libation.

We hastened on, and before nightfall came in sight of the Pass, which bears the strange name of 'The Ravine of Baboons.' It was not encouraging to catch sight of a group of soldiers watching us through field-glasses from an eminence. At the entrance to the Ravine we found a military tent pitched, and the guards waiting to question us. The N.C.O. was none too well-mannered. He scoffed at the idea of our carrying so heavy a load of books, and said: 'If you tell me stories like that I'll search your baggage through!' We then produced our passports, which he scrutinised. They were important-looking documents, and evidently impressed him, perhaps the more so because he was wholly illiterate, as we discovered next day. The mere sight of them, however, had a wholesome effect upon him, for he handed them back with an apology for not being able to offer us tea in his tent. We continued our way through the narrow Pass for another two miles, and at every turn of the road soldiers appeared. When we reached the little village we were at once surrounded by a crowd of military, and an officer coming on the scene told us we could not proceed until such a time as the Governor, by telegram, should have indicated his
485 willingness for us to do so. He directed us then to the only vacant room in the place, which was situated in an inn court so small that the carts had to stand in the road outside. The room itself was wretched beyond description. It had no door, while a hole in the wall served as window, so that we were unable for a moment to escape the inspection of the crowd of soldiers. The

kang was broken down, the top surface of mud had 485 given way, and through the large holes the semi-burnt horse-manure appeared in the space below. We received a good deal of gratuitous, but not ill-natured, advice from the young recruits as to the angle at which our bedding could best be distributed, to lessen the danger of falling into the chasm. 'That quilt must come a little more to the north, or your feet will be down the hole.' 'It is a tight fit for three, but you can move a little more to the east and still be safe.'

Failing hot water, we sent for a basin full of cold, provoking the remark: 'They are extraordinarily clean. Always washing!' We were indeed glad at last to lie down under cover of darkness and get some hours of sleep! Viewed by the light of the grey dawn our conditions looked no less wretched than they had done the night before. The court was again crowded, [525] and round the entrance of the inn groups of men and boys were already gathered throwing dice and gambling for small stakes. Half-a-dozen youths at once attracted [681] our attention, their trouser-legs having been slit down, showing the flesh covered with festering wounds as a result of floggings. At 8 a.m. an officer came round, and 486 we signified to him our desire to move on that day. He was aggravatingly affable, and told us that on such a hard journey as the one we were taking, it was always well to rest for a day. 'Our own food-supply and the grain for the animals is only sufficient to get us through to Hami,' we protested, 'and delay will be serious.' 'Yes, yes, yes, yes,' he replied, 'you leave it to me and I'll see that the telegram to the Governor goes to-day,' thus incidentally revealing the fact that he had not yet sent it.

It was useless to argue, although our passports bore a *laissez-passer* for the Sinkiang frontier. 'I have been

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I[inn at Hsinghsinghsia--Analyst]

486 in Tientsin,' he said, 'and know Westerners well; they are always in a hurry. Now you stay here and thoroughly rest for a few days.' Our hearts sank at the prospect of official procrastination and excuses, but we would not give ourselves away as impatient foreigners, so thanked him and smiled, thus avoiding the fate of one concerning whom it is written:

> 'All that was left was a tombstone white,
> Because he tried to hustle the East.'

742 We found on enquiry that the garrison[1] held a thousand men, and that two of the Commanding Officers had each a wife with him. Changing into clean dresses we
000 therefore started out forthwith to pay our respects to these ladies. One of them was little more than a pitiful child, cowed to the point of scarcely daring to open her mouth, and whose husband was a heavy opium-smoker. The other lady was a strong-minded, intelligent Moslem, of a fine physique. She talked with us on a variety of subjects and made us give her a lesson in the Government Phonetic Script, of which she already knew something from a young Shansi boy who was not allowed to proceed on his journey and was acting as her servant.

Returning to the inn, we unpacked the travelling harmonium and some parcels of books, and accompanied by the Christian men proceeded to hold an open-air service. In a moment the gambling rings were broken up and we were surrounded by an eager crowd of listeners. Then the two officers appeared, and took control of the men. Hymn-sheets were handed round, and soon the choruses were taken up and sung vigorously. The sight of the gaily-bound gospels and other books proved so attractive that we were overwhelmed with customers, and from the time of our first service we had

1 [At Hsinghsinghsia--Analyst

no further trouble in the inn from inquisitive onlookers. 000
We hung a curtain at our door and no one ventured to
lift it.

The aspect of Hsinghsinghsia was very remarkable. 133
It is a narrow ravine between massive rocks. All these
were of sombre colour and forbidding outline, some
being veined with long streaks of white granite, which
traversed them just as forked-lightning appears to
rend an ink-black sky. The lower portion of the
rocks was worn by the waters of some ancient river,
and an old tablet records that 'In this place baboons
were wont to come to drink,' hence the name 'The 764
Ravine of Baboons.' The only object of historical
interest was the grave of a Mahommedan saint, whose
tomb was cut in the solid rock. It was sealed, but
hearing that we wished to see it, a sergeant broke the
seals and allowed us to enter. The sepulchre dated
from the Han dynasty, in the early days of the Christian
era, and is believed by the faithful to hold an empty
tomb, the holy man, whose name was Kai, having come
to life again and passed elsewhere. In the Chinese 135
temple the Taoist priest showed us with pride a fine
specimen of quartz, which he had procured from a
neighbouring hill. The name of Hsinghsinghsia, by the
alteration of a character without changing the sound,
may also be read 'The Starry Pass,' and the two names
are used interchangeably. This quartz he called the
'Star Stone' and the hill from which it is taken 'Starry
Mountain.' It glitters in the moonlight like a thousand
twinkling stars.

As the evangelistic services continued we became 486
very friendly with the men, from whom we heard many 702
tragic stories. One boy of sixteen had been on his way
from his home in Yungchang, Kansu, to an uncle, who
had a business in Hami. 'My mother is a widow and I

486 702 am her only child,' he told us. 'She has no idea what has happened to me, and thinks that I am safe with my uncle in Hami. They stopped me here, and say that I am to be a soldier. They allow us neither to write nor to receive letters. I was born to an unlucky fate.'

An elderly man employed in the Yamen had left his wife in Urumchi in order to transact business in Kansu, but he was not allowed to get there, and had been doing office work for the garrison for over a year. He was attempting to forget his troubles by opium-smoking.

[681] A youth, whose legs were a terrible sight from flogging, came smiling to our room and addressed us by name: 'Do you know me?' he said. 'I am a Suchow boy and attended your Children's Service every night last winter. I would not believe the people who told me I should not get through to "Kow Wai," but this is the result of my folly!' We spoke about the wounds on his body, and he told us that he had run away and been recaptured by patrols, and then severely beaten on being brought back to the camp.

Some of the unfortunate men though supplied with adequate passports had been held up, waiting day after day hoping to hear that they might proceed on their journey. No telegram had ever come, nor had they any means of ascertaining whether the permission they hoped for had even been requested. The horrors of this Inferno were more strongly impressed on us each day. From early dawn till dark the men gambled, loafed, fought and cursed their fate. Young boys were thrown into the company of men to whom no form of vice was unknown, and a spirit of blank hopelessness dominated the place.

485 On the second night of our stay[1] heavy rain began to fall, and continued through the next day. It poured into our room by a dozen holes in the roof, and the

[1] [At Hsinghsinghsia-- Analyst]

[FACING P. 196]

THE INN OF LOST ILLUSIONS.

"This is a small place, and the inns are poor. I suppose your hotels are all better than this."

To face page 196.

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485 mud floor was transformed into a series of mud pits so treacherously slippery that we had to move about with the greatest care. During a fine spell between two storms the Commanding Officer appeared at our door to return our call. We were not sorry that he should see our plight, but his only comment was: 'This is a small place, and the inns are poor. I suppose that in England your hotels are all better than this?'

486 7/12 Though we suffered so much discomfort from the rain, we were secretly rejoicing, because news was brought to us that a number of young men had escaped that night, and thanks to the rain had not yet been recaptured. [312] Hsinghsinghsia has the only spring of water in an immense area, and the patrols found it sufficient to watch the next springs on either side in order to take deserters. As the hunted man crept stealthily to the water's edge to slake his thirst under cover of darkness, the mounted soldiers seized him, bound him and drove him back to the camp, where many had died from the severity of the flogging received. After the rains, however, little pools of water collected in the hollows of the granite rocks, and thus enabled the fugitives to leave the main road and so reach freedom. Many deaths had occurred through pedestrians, or mounted travellers, trying to cross the frontier without passing the camp. One day six riderless mules were captured, the men having, doubtless, died of thirst in the sands.

000 It was very touching to see the delight with which groups of these poor men would gather around us and talk for long hours. We had travelled so much in North China that we knew the localities from which several of them had come. Some from Shansi found that we actually knew the very villages where their parents lived, and in some cases we had even visited the homes of relatives. One youth was the son of the

000 Kinta woman, Mrs. Ma, in whose home we had been entertained each time we passed through that town.

The great love that a Chinese, even though a prodigal, has for his home, brought many to the point of tears as we spoke of familiar scenes, and it was not difficult to speak to them of a Father in Heaven, Whose goods they were wasting in a far country, and Who was waiting for their return.

The Chinese are a long-suffering people; they bear the tyrannies of their oppressors, and the dominion of rapacious officialdom, with a pathetic resignation, but the hour is at hand when they will rise and avenge the wrongs of generations. In such an hour no violence is regarded as an excess, and they will deal with their oppressors in their own way.

CHAPTER XXXIV

GOBI NIGHTS

486 On the second day of our sojourn in Hsinghsinghsia, seeing that no word had come to authorise our leaving, we thought we would communicate with Mr. Hunter, of the China Inland Mission in Urumchi, but when we innocently suggested that we wished to send a telegram, we were put off with the reply that it was needless to involve ourselves in unnecessary expense; and when we further insisted we were met with a blank refusal—the telegraph wires could be used by the military only. Seeing how things were going, we wrote a letter in which, knowing that it would be censored, we merely informed Mr. Hunter of our whereabouts; on the third day, however, calling at the post-office, we saw our letter still lying there on the table, and were told that the

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

censor had not yet called! These incidents, naturally, 486 greatly added to our sense of discomfort, and we now seriously began to wonder when we should be allowed to leave this place of detention.

A party of Tibetan lamas, with their attendants, were also, like ourselves, unable to proceed, and having pitched a group of tents on the sand, had already been waiting a week for their permission to move on. They were greatly inconvenienced by the delay as they were travelling with fifteen little donkeys, including their pack animals. On the fourth morning, there being still no word of the permission we were desiring, we wandered out to this Tibetan camp to enquire if the lamas were more fortunate than ourselves. 'Any news?' we asked. 'News? What news can you hope for with such a gang as this? Our donkeys will soon be dead for lack of fodder, and if we all die they don't care!'

As we sat and talked, a string of carts appeared, laden 705 with sacks of wheat, bundles of fodder, vats of oil, and a few baskets of vegetables. This was the food supply for the camp,[1] as both men and beasts were fed from the Hami oasis, six days distant. We then followed the waggons back to the camp, and, glad of any diversion from the monotony of the day, we watched the unloading. We next paid the usual midday call to the tele- 486 graph office, and there, to our unspeakable relief, learnt that a message had at last come permitting both ourselves and the lamas to proceed. Fearful, however, lest the authorities might suddenly change their mind and insist on our taking a longer 'rest-cure,' we hurried back and issued orders that the animals should at once be fed and watered, and the carts prepared for an afternoon start. Therefore, when an hour later the officer called with news that the permit had come, we were almost ready to leave.

[1] [At Hsinghsinghsia-- Analyst]

486 'The Governor declares,' read the officer, who this morning was in a flattering mood, 'that the three ladies, Feng Precious Pearl, Feng Polished Jade, and Kai All Brave, are people of the highest reputation, and therefore they, their escort and baggage, are permitted to enter Turkestan without delay.'

There was great lamentation in the garrison when the men saw us preparing to leave. 'They say that next week we shall get our pay, and if this be true we would have bought all your remaining books!' The gaming tables were abandoned as the crowd gathered to say good-bye and wish us good luck, and as we left the ravine an orderly appeared carrying a handful of vegetables—two cucumbers and a melon—from the officer's wife. The supply of these luxuries from Hami being very limited this gift represented a whole day's ration for her household.

491 It was with a delightful sense of freedom that we
emerged from the 'Ravine of the Baboons' and took
133 the desert path once more. We had left the grey and black pebbles of the Black Gobi behind us on the south side of the ravine, and we now came out into a most interesting and varied country. Granite hills surrounded us, and frequently the carts had to be dragged over immense slabs. The soil in places was red; the outlines of the ranges of hills were bare and rugged, while their colouring was as delicate as it was remarkable. Blue, purple, green and grey stretches of rock lay all around us, and as sun and shadow played on them the whole landscape was iridescent with the tones of the rainbow. We also passed at the very foot of the
135 Starry Mountain, and there delayed a few minutes so as
316 to fill our hands with the glittering fragments of quartz. At the base of the granite rocks were excavated holes, large enough to admit the entrance of a man's body, and

these proved to be gold-mines from which the sand, 135
having been removed in baskets, provides a fair amount 316
of gold-dust, after being washed out. In some places[1]
the grit on which we walked was composed of minute
granite fragments of every colour, and it was very 136
interesting to notice that the little, grey, desert lizard,
which had never left us all through our travels, had so
accommodated itself to the soil in which it lived that its
skin had become many-hued, like a beautiful mosaic,
so that it was indistinguishable from the surrounding
ground.

A large temple stood on an eminence not far from the 782
ravine, and here we found the lamas, who had been as prompt as ourselves in quitting the camp, burning incense and making obeisance to the gods. The lamas expressed some surprise that we neither burned incense nor prostrated ourselves, nor sought the blessing of the Guardians of the Road by striking the temple bell with its wooden hammer to call their attention. We were the only travellers on that road who would dare to take such a journey without observing this ritual, and such an omission must be either a sign of impiety or that we enjoyed the protection of a power superior to any god in that temple. 'We never start on our day's journey without asking the blessing of God,' explained one of our carters, who two months previously would have been as unwilling as the lamas themselves to leave without the blessing of the Goddess of Mercy.

It was fortunate for us that this first journey, taken 312
as it was by day, was not an abnormally long one, and by 10 p.m. we reached Shachüantz—'The Spring of the Sands'—but unfortunately it surpassed all the others we had hitherto sampled for the bad quality of its water, which was metallic as well as bitter and salt.
The slabs of granite over which we had driven had, 494

[1] [Near Hsinghsinghsia -- Analyst]

494 moreover, told badly on our cart-wheels, and one of the spokes had cracked ; all the same we pushed on, resuming the night stages. The hour of departure was fixed for 6 p.m., so the whole party ate a meal at 4 p.m., after which the care of the animals, packing the carts and settling the inn account kept us busy until we left.

000 As soon as we were clear of the village, according to our habit, we enjoyed a time of reading aloud, the smooth, sandy roads keeping the cart so steady that without undue fatigue to the eyes we were easily able to do so. As daylight faded, however, we dismounted for our evening walk, which generally continued until darkness fell, for we had not our carters' gift of seeing by night. At this time of the year there were only about seven hours of darkness, yet always at sunset the icy chill seemed to rise from the surface of the sand, when everyone at once put on an extra garment. Then silence fell on the party, and the only sound heard was the rhythmic clang of the great camel bell which swung from the axle of our big cart. The crescent moon rose and set ; we watched the great stars move slowly across the sky ; on the horizon magnetic fires rose and fell, and when the driver touched the mules with his whip a flash of light appeared. The space, the silence, the darkness, the loneliness all produced a state of consciousness when the accepted values of life seemed readjusted, being found to be curiously different from those accepted by day in the busy throng. Day uttereth speech, but night showeth knowledge ; and we have remained wiser women for the meditations of those Gobi nights.

494 Our carters had frequently made reference to a
312 stage of unusual difficulty and length still lying
ahead, and at Kushui—'The Spring of Bitter Water'

—we found that we had reached it, and that 46 English miles still divided us from Kotzyentun——' The Dove Tower '—which was the next oasis. We now occasionally met a convoy taking supplies to the troops, and at the ' Spring of Bitter Water ' our carters were delighted to find a string of carts returning to Hami, whose drivers proposed to travel with us. So all started in good time together for the record march and made good progress until 1 a.m., when, without warning, two sections of the wheel rim detached themselves and fell to the ground. The situation would have been hopeless had it not been for our fellow-travellers, but now in the space of half an hour the Chinese evangelist came to an arrangement with one of the carters to transfer us and our baggage to his cart, the remainder of the party staying behind to patch up the wheel and to drag the empty vehicle somehow to the end of the appointed stage.

Meanwhile we jolted along, but before we reached ' The Dove Tower ' the sun was high and the scorching heat was almost intolerable, for there was no cover and we were wholly unprotected from its rays. All the same on we jolted, sitting upon some mysterious boxes, which were the cargo of our new conveyance ; but before long the aroma with which we seemed to be surrounded caused us to enquire what merchandise was being conveyed over this desert road. ' Dead mules,' was the answer. ' Two of mine have just died, so I have packed them into those boxes to sell for meat further down the road.' The end of the incident was, that we bought the meat, and promptly abandoned it !

CHAPTER XXXV

FROM DOVE TOWER TO HAMI

361 THE oasis of ' Dove Tower ' proved to be somewhat [366] larger than those which we had recently passed. It even boasted a little shop where one could purchase matches, cigarettes, tobacco, small-sized face towels, incense, and the poorest quality of the paper articles [505] required for temple worship. This shop was also the post-office, though it provided neither stamps nor postcards ; it kept, however, a surprisingly good stock of 425 medicinal plants and opium. The few inns which composed the village were built at the foot of a high, over- [136] hanging cliff riddled with holes, in which wild doves built their nests. Flocks of these birds were always flying across the face of the cliff, their wings shining in the sunlight as though covered with silver and their feathers with yellow gold. The heat reflected from the cliff was intense, and we were glad to find the inn room to be windowless, and depending entirely for ventilation on a small hole in the roof. This type of room at first sight seems to be devoid of any single element of comfort, for on entering the traveller finds himself in a dark apartment scarcely larger than a cupboard. Apart from a narrow passage, the whole floor space is occupied by a mud *kang*. In place of a ceiling the roof is lined with dried grass, indescribably filthy and coated with a black deposit from the heavy smoke of the smouldering manure, and which grass gradually loosens and hangs down but a few feet from the sleeper's face. A small round hole in the roof, about the size of an ordinary stove-pipe, supplies the ventilation and one ray of daylight, for as there is no window, on closing the

door the darkness is almost complete. Experience in 485
travel, however, enables one to appreciate the fact that in this dark hole: 1. The rays of the sun being excluded, the traveller (whose only rest is taken by day) has a good chance of sleep; 2. The heat does not easily penetrate this earthen dwelling; 3. The darkness is so distasteful to flies that once the room is shut up they voluntarily leave by the hole in the roof; 4. The Gobi wind and swirling sand are as effectively excluded as possible; 5. The tired traveller may sleep as soundly as he pleases, there being no aperture through which a stealthy hand can introduce itself and abstract his goods while he slumbers.

We had been in bed for about three hours when we 494
heard the sound of the derelict cart approaching the 485
inn. It was quite unmistakable owing to the thud given each time when the injured portion of the wheel met the ground. There were a few deep groans from the driver; a brief conversation with the innkeeper; and then, silence while the exhausted men slept.

In the afternoon a council of war was held, and the Turki driver of our rescued conveyance was induced, for a moderate sum of money, to fill up his empty cart with the heavy luggage, which he undertook to deliver in Hami. There was no blacksmith nor wheelwright in the village, but a venerable Turki volunteered his amateur services, and by means of a length of rope, a few nails and the skilful use of an adze, before nightfall the wheel was so far repaired, that by letting the cart go empty we hoped to bring it in safety to Hami.

Our next night of travel brought us to the well-named 475
oasis of Changliushui—'The Inexhaustible Spring.' 361
As we approached by moonlight we suddenly caught 312
sight of a tree, the first we had seen since leaving

361 Ansi, and our own exhilaration was shared by the
whole cavalcade. The tired mules shook their heads as
485 they smelt the cool verdure, while the carter explained:
312 'Now our troubles are all over! We have come to
sweet water!' Several of the inns were full, but we
finally got rooms in a seemingly abandoned courtyard.
The landlord was away from home, but a good deal of
knocking brought his wife from her bed, and she
consented to receive us. In a few minutes the sheep-dung fire was glowing, the water boiling, and we were
drinking an ambrosial infusion-tea made with 'sweet
water.'

361 A good number of families inhabited this oasis[1], and
we were now sufficiently far from the Kansu frontier
494 for the normal conditions of travel and business to
312 obtain once more. The various inn yards were full of
peasants' carts bringing produce from Hami, and we
were also able to buy fresh vegetables and a melon.
We sat for several hours in the shade of the trees by the
bubbling spring, talking with the women who came
there to draw water. It was a restful spot, and it was
with regret that we left it. The next dawn brought us
361 to Hwanglukang—'The Hill of Yellow Reeds.' Here
133 the character of the country changed, the village being
231 situated in the midst of rolling steppes, where tall
grass supplied abundant provender for cattle. In this
place we saw the cattle all kneeling before tussocks of
coarse grass which they had worn down to smooth
hummocks with the rubbing of their necks. The appearance was very strange and gave the impression
of an act of worship. In the afternoon we wandered
794 out to see the village and its inhabitants, calling at the
Mosque, where we found a venerable Ahung—courteous,
dignified and friendly—surrounded by a group of little
563 boys, to whom he was teaching the Koran. They were

[1] [Changliushui -- Analyst

the sons of the Turki families in the neighbourhood, but 563
the innkeepers were still mostly Chinese.

It was here[1] that we experienced the one serious 262
mishap of our journey. One of the carters had volun- 137
teered to cook the dinner, and having espied round the well-mouth a thick growth of toadstools, privately decided to flavour the *mien* with them. Luckily for us the experiment, from a culinary point of view, was a failure. The gravy in which the macaroni floated was grey, slimy, and carried globules of oil on its surface, being besides nauseous to the taste. In consequence we ate but little, and one of the party finding a fragment of what she took to be a mushroom in her bowl, removed it with her chopsticks and cast it on to the rubbish heap which lay in a corner of the room. Another, less wise, ate her portion without question, and an hour later was taken exceedingly ill, so that for some hours we wondered how things would go with her. By evening, however, the symptoms abated, and she gradually recovered. Others of the party were also affected, but less seriously.

It was consequently with a renewed sense of gratitude 361
to Almighty God that we moved on to Yükoshu—' The 485
Elms '—where by the side of the village pond we found
a spacious and empty inn, clean and comfortable, where 133
a quiet night did wonders in restoring strength. We were now only seventeen miles from the town of Hami, and next morning we started early, all excitement at the thought of being soon in that ancient and renowned city. We travelled first over an undulating grassy
plain, and later on through a belt of sand. We had 000
only gone two miles when we saw the Chinese Evangelist, who had gone on ahead, galloping back towards us and riding a strange horse. To our amazement he brought the news that Mr. Hunter (whom we believed

[1] [changliushui--Analyst]

600 to be in Urumchi, three weeks' journey away) had come down to meet us, and was only a few miles distant. The horse he was riding was Mr. Hunter's, who had sent him back to announce his arrival.

Before long we caught sight of a small cart of an unusual shape, in reality a little ammunition-waggon, used during the war, and sold to Mr. Hunter, in Urumchi, by some Russians. As we approached, the little conveyance drew up by the side of the road, and a tall, upright figure, dressed in coarse, white Turki cotton, dismounted and stood by the horses' heads. For a moment only we hesitated as to whether this was indeed Mr. Hunter or a Turki merchant, but there was something in his bearing which distinguished him from Chantow, Kirghiz, or even Russian. In a moment we had leapt from our own cart and were shaking hands with this compatriot, who though living a six weeks' journey away from us was still our nearest neighbour on the North-West road. His blue eyes expressed simplicity and candour, his hair and beard were white, and his presence was most benign and dignified. This was the man from the Scotch Highlands who a quarter of a century ago had made his way to Central Asia, and establishing his base at Urumchi had lived there ever since, often travelling, however, over great distances, driving from Chuguchak on the Siberian border to the Ili Valley, Barkul and Hami, Turfan and Kashgar.

For a few moments we stood talking, and he told us that rooms were hired for us, in Hami, at as comfortable an inn as he could find, where he urged us now to rest, promising to call and see us again in the late afternoon. Then with old-world courtesy he bowed us back to our cart, and disappeared under the awning of his own little waggon.

Hami is by far the largest and most fertile oasis 361
through which we had passed. For six miles before we 312
sighted the town we were travelling in highly-cultivated 241
land, abundantly watered, and between fields of wheat, 133
cotton, millet, maize and sorgum. Approaching the town we passed through a fine avenue of trees; the sky overhead was cloudless, and in the background the snow-peaks of the Karlik Tagh Range glittered in the sunshine. At that moment a group of girls in long scarlet dresses and flowing white veils came running down the road chasing a herd of unruly donkeys. They gave the last touch to a brilliant scene of prosperity and riotous colour.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE WONDERFUL CITY OF HAMI

THE beauties of Hami exceeded all our expectations, 485
high as these had been. The inn in which we stayed was situated in the large, unwalled, commercial area of the town, and the landlord was a wealthy Moslem Turki. When our drivers turned into the spacious, open courtyard bordered with well-kept flower-beds, and surrounded by rows of well-built rooms, we could scarcely credit that this was the 'inn' of which Mr. Hunter had spoken so modestly. A suite of three rooms, communicating by inner doors, was allotted us, and we found that we were the first tenants to occupy them. The windows were newly papered, and with a fresh, clean matting on the *kang* all was spotlessly clean. There was no stabling provided, however, so after unlading, our drivers, carts, and mules departed to another inn of a more ordinary type. We had the

485 exclusive use of a small kitchen, in which we cooked with our own utensils. Our word was accepted that no pork, lard or swine's flesh of any description would be used, nevertheless the members of this large Moslem clan preferred employing another kitchen rather than that contaminated by wandering Gentiles.

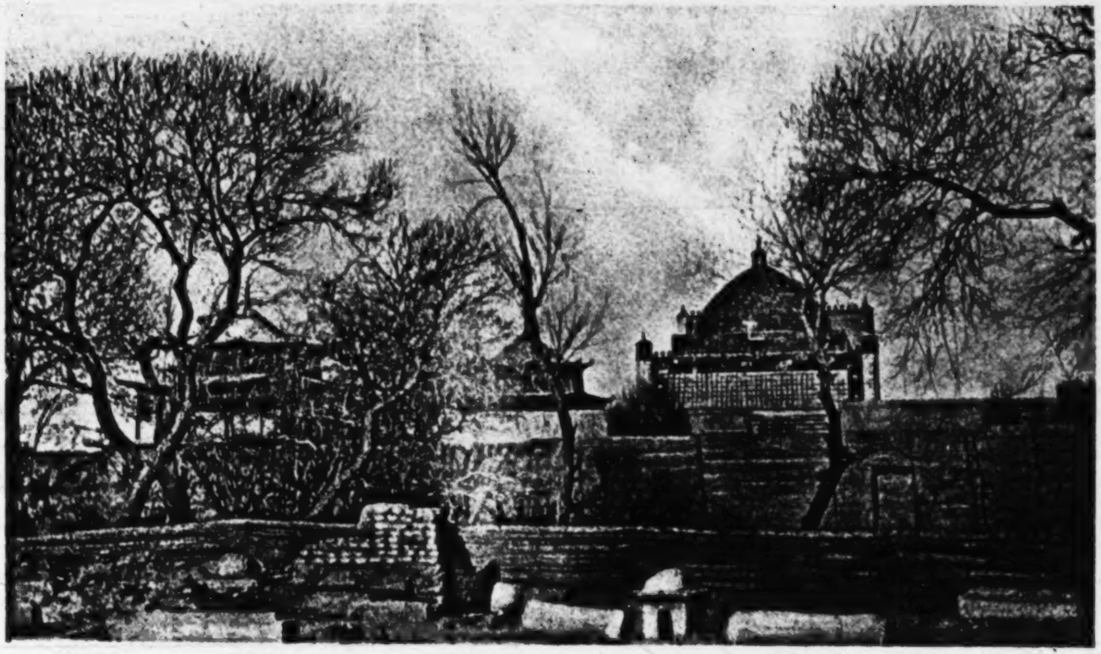
362 The landlord was on the spot to receive us, and at once we were served with a melon, which was entirely worthy of the reputation that Hami has gained for this fruit. An hour later we sat down to an abundant meal of rice and good Chantow bread, a dish of chopped mutton and egg-plant fried together, a plate of French beans *sautés* in mutton fat with sliced cucumber, and the whole accompanied by unlimited 'sweet water' tea, followed by slices of cantaloupe melon—truly a feast for the gods!

485 Before we had finished our meal Mr. Hunter arrived with an armful of our much accumulated mail, which kept us fully occupied for the remainder of the afternoon. The landlord meanwhile explained to us that his inn was only recently built, and was constructed to accommodate such merchants as might need to spend a considerable period in Hami. It was not yet officially opened, but when his old friend, Mr. Hunter, asked that we might be his first guests, he could not refuse him, especially in view of the long distance which we had come. This eventful day then closed with a hot sponge-bath, as, for the first time since leaving Suchow, we were able to obtain sufficient hot water for our use.

361 During the next few days we visited every portion of the three settlements which form the city of Hami.
134 There is a well-built, mud-walled town in which is situated the Palace of the Khan, known by the Chinese as Wang ye.

Jenghiz Khan, in the thirteenth century, bestowed

[FACING P. 210]



THE WONDERFUL CITY OF HAMI.
The Tomb of the Khans.

To face page 210.

346

361 this oasis on his son, Chagatai, and Hami has never
ceased to be ruled by a succession of Khans, who at
634 the present day are wise enough to recognise the
suzerainty of China, and thus avoid the friction which
would be caused by any rebellious policy. At a little
361 distance stood another walled city which contained the
712 Chinese Yamen barracks and garrison, and where a
good portion of the Chinese population reside.
361 Outside, between and around these two enclosures, were
the busy streets and covered bazaars, forming a business
[366] quarter for both Chinese and Turki. Some splendid
parks, through which ran a wide canal, flanked the
Huei Huei[1] city. Every available acre of land adjacent
244 to the town was used for intensive market-gardening,
and beyond this, to the very edge of the oasis (which
stretched seven miles to north and south, and five
miles to east and west), the land was brought under
cultivation by Turki farmers.

As usual, we took the first opportunity of calling on
592 the wives of our landlord. They occupied certain
inner courtyards, well furnished and decorated with
flowers both cut and growing. The harem contained
the regulation number of four wives, and a goodly
company of children, as well as a widowed relative and
her daughter.

291 The girls wore gay dresses made in one piece, slit at
the neck by a hole, through which the head passed, and
which was then tied in on either shoulder. Even the
smallest girls wore their dresses to the ankle. A veil,
usually of white muslin, but in some cases made of
coloured silk, covered the head and fell to the knees.
It concealed the hands, and when in mixed company
was held up and adroitly manipulated, so as to be drawn
across the face or withdrawn at will. The women's

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[1] Huei Huei, the Chinese word for Moslem.

291 faces were not veiled, and they seemed to have considerable freedom. The flowing, white drapery adds greatly to the beauty of these tall, dark, handsome creatures, and affords full play for coquettish movements and tantalising concealment when once curiosity
[302] has been aroused. In the younger women a thick line of black joined the eyebrows over the bridge of the nose, and the face was framed by two long, shining plaits hanging over the breast. The feet were bare, and when indoors were thrust into a heel-less slipper, but when walking out of doors top-boots were usually worn, and sometimes blue velvet socks embroidered with sequins. The whole dress is finished off with a round, brimless cap, which worn over the veil keeps it in place. Hami has its own peculiar style, shape and decoration of the cap, and the initiated can distinguish it in a moment from the designs used in other cities.

574 Ever since the name of Hami has been known to the European nations, it has carried with it the report of the extraordinary hospitality of its people, and at the present day travellers may still count upon a friendly reception by its inhabitants. This is doubtless due in part to its peculiar geographical position, which might be compared with that of a lonely island in a wide sea, only that here the oasis is an island of green in the ocean of sand. The produce of this terraced and well-watered region is more than sufficient to supply its own population, and its parks, its streams and flowers, as well as the abundance of its vegetables and fruits, amply justified the name of the 'earthly paradise,' by which it had been described to us in Suchow.

563 The streets and bazaars fascinated us. Here were gathered men from all parts of Asia, mixing freely in
463 the crowded thoroughfares, yet curiously segregated
366 as to their respective trades and lines of commerce.

All the market-gardeners were Chihli men, and spoke 366
of themselves as coming from Tientsin; the banks 463
and money-shops were in the hands of Shansi people; 563
coppersmiths and travelling pedlars were from Honan; and the riveter of broken china was always ready to speak of his distant Szchuan home. Even in the quality of the goods sold the racial divisions were precise. Finely-woven cottons, silks, and the more delicate materials were handled exclusively by the Chinese, but the gorgeous and barbaric striped cottons, carpets, rugs, saddle-bags and all woollen goods were sold by the Turki. The Chantow showed a most attractive *étalage* of golden-crusted breadstuffs, by the side of which the anaemic steamed roll of the Chinese presented no attraction. The fruit and vegetables, though grown by the Chinese, were sold in Turki shops, whose stalls were filled with carrots, egg-plant, and several varieties of French beans, including one in which the pod was over a foot long and circular in shape. Vegetable marrows were in such profusion as 244
to warrant an old name for Hami—'The Oasis of the Gourd.' Onions, juicy green peppers as large as oranges, celery, lettuce and cucumbers were in profusion, but peas and broad beans were not grown by the Tientsin market-gardeners, they were sown in the fields by the Chantow farmer, and viewed not as vegetables for the board of the epicure but as fodder for animals.

The season was too early for much fruit, but a small apple was procurable, and the first ripe melons were in the market. The best quality of melon known in Turkestan bears the name of 'Hami,' and is a large fruit of the netted order, the flesh being firm and sometimes white, but more frequently orange-tinted, and of superb flavour. The water-melon (*Citrullus vulgaris*)

244 grows to enormous size, and varieties of the little '*tien kwa,*' '*mien kwa*' and '*hsiang kwa*' were here, as in China, prime favourites with the Chinese. Melon cultivation has been carried by the Kumulik to a fine art. On a sandy or stony patch the plants are so trained as to allow each fruit to rest upon a dry, sand-baked spot, where it absorbs the heat of the torrid rays. The grower must work ceaselessly in his garden, watering, pruning and training the tendrils, and when the fruit has come to perfection he and his assistant never leave the tiny lodge from which they watch their precious merchandise, even taking it in turn to sleep. When the fruit is still quite young and the skin soft, each melon is branded with the grower's monomark, and when ripe this mark stands out in bold relief, white and hard.

793 One day we took a good consignment of Arabic
gospels and tracts in our cart, and with the Chinese
291 Evangelist went to pay some calls in the Huei Huei
482 city. As we entered the gate we were met by an old
white-bearded Ahung in a white turban and long gown. By his side walked a tall and beautiful woman in a pale blue cotton dress and white veil, who carried a water-pot on her head. The whole picture was so reminiscent of Galilean scenes as to cause us a momentary shock as we realised that this was not Nazareth but the 'shameful city of Camul'—for thus did Marco Polo refer to this oasis of the desert.

592 As usual the women asked us to their houses, and
where there was a difficulty with the language it always seemed easy to find an interpreter, for the Moslem frequently adds a Chinese wife to his harem, and many of the people are bilingual. The rooms in which we
352 were received were not unlike those of the Chinese,
576 only that the *kangs* were much lower and unwarmed,

and covered with handsome carpets. In accordance 352
with the custom we took off our shoes before mounting [576]
them. The family wardrobe was kept in handsome, inlaid boxes, and on the tables stood large brass dishes which served to hold the national dish of 'pillau,' as well as brass and copper pots for purposes of purification.

In every house there were several wives and many 592
children. The number of inhabitants of such cities as 161
stated on maps and in surveys is seriously underrated, the extraordinarily rapid increase both by the number of children born and by colonisation having brought the population to a much higher figure than statistics allow.

After visiting a few homes, we proceeded to view a 137
remarkable willow tree which is reckoned as being one of the sights of Hami. This plant presents a congeries of about fifty trunks, curiously gnarled, knotted, and intertwined, and yet all are said to grow from one root, having spread so as to fill several courtyards.
After duly admiring this wonder we returned to the cart, 000
and when we had taken our seats, opened our parcel of books. In a moment the word went round, and we were the centre of an excited crowd of boys, each of whom wanted to buy a volume. Experience of the bold and insolent Moslem schoolboy, however, had taught us to be wary in dealing with them, so before we allowed one copy to be purchased the Evangelist explained that on every page the sacred name of 'Huda' (God) was written, which must on no account be treated with disrespect. Nevertheless, for as long as the store of books lasted, we sold them as fast as we could hand them out to both old and young alike, and when the last was gone the demand for more was so persistent that the driver was obliged to whip up

180 Molly, and we left the Huei Huei city at a canter, pursued by a crowd of schoolboys offering higher prices than we had asked for the privilege of buying.

437 The next afternoon was spent in the Chinese city, where a quiet and respectful crowd stood around and conversed as we sat on benches, sipping tea, at the counter of the leading tradesman of the place. Our shopping expeditions have been infrequent during the years of our residence in China, it being more convenient for busy people who really want an article, to have a selection brought to the house for approval. On the few occasions, however, when we have visited a shop the expedition partook of the nature of a social event. On our arrival benches are drawn forward, tea served, and the master of the establishment, who converses on many topics, is flanked by a large group of apprentices, who are kept running to and fro fetching and carrying goods. On this occasion we wished to buy a few yards of silk and three face towels. The merchant, not loath to display his wide knowledge of the world before the admiring crowd, on hearing that we came from England, remarked: 'Ah! yes, the capital, London! A bigger city than Pekin. This is a good piece of silk. Is England a republic? Oh, a kingdom? I have heard that you are ruled by Upper and Lower Houses.' Meanwhile we examined every foot of the silk for uneven threads, while the crowd murmured: 'They know all about everything!' We had already impressed the multitude, by the fact that when our family names were asked for, one of us had answered: 'My name is Feng, with two drops of water,' by this means designating which of the many characters representing 'Feng' we indicated.

It seemed a pity to introduce business into such a social atmosphere, but when the silk had been weighed

and priced, and the face towels selected, with a good 437
deal of advice from the crowd, well-mannered bargaining began. Our basic offer was about half of the price written on the tag attached to the goods. The courteous merchant then smiled and indicated a notice hanging outside his shop: 'No prices discussed here,' to which the Greek chorus again echoed: 'He does not discuss the prices!' We affably acquiesced, but assured him that our money was insufficient for such an expensive outlay. With a wave of the hand, he met us half-way, saying: 'You are guests from a far country. Have a little more tea!' thus subtly indicating that the bargain was concluded. A chit was produced by one of the apprentices, and another began to rub down the ink on his slab, being careful in our presence to observe the Confucian dictum that when the 'Princely Man' rubs down his ink, no sound is ever heard. While he was thus occupied in preparing the materials necessary to write out the account, we rapidly noted the amount in pencil on paper, and waited to see if his tallied. 'Did you see that?' said a man at our elbow. 'You'll find that they are right, too Reading, writing and arithmetic are all quite easy to them!' We rose to leave, but as we did so we handed a packet of Christian books to the merchant, which he accepted with evident pleasure, then with sharp orders he dispersed the assistants and escorted us to our carriage.

Early one morning the landlord appeared at our door 682
in a state of great agitation. A young woman, married
to a relative of his, had poisoned herself with strychnine, 757
and they urged us to go and make an attempt to save her life. 'Our own remedy,' he said, 'is mare's milk,
and her husband is scouring the city to get some.' We 000
were taken to the house where a young woman lay on

600

the *kang* surrounded by friends and neighbours. When we had dealt with the case, and felt that her life was saved, the young husband expressed his gratitude, saying: 'I thought you would come, for though you do not know us, my wife and I used to regularly attend your children's service at Suchow.'

We have already remarked that the constantly recurring inference made by Moslems that their superior cleanliness prevented their allowing our party the use of kitchen premises and cooking utensils, was a source of irritation to the Chinese and to ourselves. An incident which occurred at Hami showed how much these self-righteous people really valued cleanliness and hygiene. An exhausted mule fell and died about twenty yards from our front door, in the very middle of the busy quarter of the town. The harness was simply removed from the carcase, which was left to be devoured by dogs, wolves and crows. In forty-eight hours the bones were picked clean, but during that time the stench, the sight, and the swarming flies were almost unendurable, and each time we left the inn it was to walk past that ghastly mass of corruption.

One day we wandered to the market-gardens which surround the city, and where a whole population are occupied in producing fruit and vegetables. We no sooner made our appearance than some beautiful little girls came flitting over the plank bridges which spanned the network of irrigation ditches, bringing us word that their mothers invited us to tea in their homes.

Each day brought us some visitors of interest. The son of the Khan came many times, bringing different friends, all anxious for conversation on religious matters. On many questions of vital importance we joined issue with the followers of the Prophet; but when we declared, 'The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to rule the earth as

King,' they always acquiesced, but added, 'Truly the *Holy man, Jesus,* is coming soon, and he will rule the earth in righteousness.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

ASIAN TRIBES

THE town called by the Chinese 'Hami' is known to the Turki as 'Kamul,' while Marco Polo wrote of it as 'Camul.' Its inhabitants are called 'Kumuliks.'

The Venetian traveller wrote: 'Camul has customs of the husbands giving up not only their house but their wives also for the entertainment of strangers. The women are, in truth, very handsome, very sensual, and fully disposed to conform in this respect to the injunctions of their husbands. In the middle of the thirteenth century Mangu Khan stopped the practice, but after three years the people petitioned him to allow them to return to it, saying that it was pleasing to the gods, who blessed them in consequence. His answer was: "Since you appear so anxious to persist in your own shame and ignominy, let it be granted as you desire. Go, live to your base customs and manners."' It is impossible but that such an ancestry should have left its impress on the unique population found in this town to-day, and the geographical position of the oasis also plays its part in forming the distinctive character of the Kumulik, in whose blood are strains of every tribe inhabiting the Central Asian plateau.

The first inhabitants and makers of the oasis were the ancient Uigurs who, ~~on~~ being driven by the Mongols from northern Dzungaria, in the Altai region, settled on

175 the land flanking the Tian Shan, notably in Urumchi, Turfan, and Hami.

[179] The Kumuliks demonstrate the strange instance of a people who have completely abandoned Buddhism to embrace Islam. Marco Polo, in the fourteenth century, spoke of them as 'idolaters,' but at the present time they are uncompromising Mohammedans. During the years of the Mohammedan insurrection, Hami was reduced to ruins, and later was used as a base by the Chinese armies which came up to quell the rebellion. As late as 1875 a Russian traveller refers to the town as lying in ruins and serving as an encampment for Chinese troops.

Hami has been called the 'Key of Dzungaria'—that great tract of land stretching to the border of southern Siberia, which has played so important a part in the history of Asian occupation.

563 From Hami onwards we met men of so many tribes and nations as to make us realise how little we had hitherto known of the peoples of this vast continent. There were Chinese, Tungan, Turki, Mongolian, Kalmuk, Qazaq, Kirghiz, Nogai, Manchurian and Russian.

Of Chinese, we met men and women from all the eighteen provinces, including officials, soldiers, tradesmen, colonists and fortune-seekers. There were also many prodigals and outlaws who dare not again pass the portals of Kiayükwan. Apart from these were the residents of the second and third generation, many of whom, doubtless, are descendants of those who, from all ranks of society, have in past years been condemned
[647] to life-exile from China. We were much impressed by the capacity of the Chinese for colonisation, for though the conquerors of Turkestan, and thus holding all important governmental and military posts, they are acceptable to the populace. Moreover, they show a great aptitude for accommodating themselves to the

[inhabitants of Hami--Analyst]

conditions of life in a new country, and though living 563
in easy intercourse with the Turki people, which is a virile and stubborn race, yet retain their own customs and traditions with remarkable tenacity.

During our residence in Kansu we had become familiar with the Tungan—called by the Chinese 'Huei Huei'—and in Turkestan they abounded. Their origin is very debatable, and a stranger on first seeing a Tungan youth would probably say: 'What a handsome Arab boy.' Their hair is never really black, their [142]
features are aquiline, and the men generally wear a short, curly, brown beard. They are tenacious Moslems [779]
in the matter of neither eating pork nor drinking spirits, and they seldom touch opium. They were the leaders in the Moslem rebellion of 1862.[1]

The Turki—called by the Chinese 'Chantow'—is the [241]
agriculturalist of Central Asia. Whereas the Tungan speaks Chinese, the Turki has his own tongue—a 197
language which has excited the interest of philologists by its regularity and intelligent structure. Professor Max Müller said: 'No society of learned men could have devised what the mind of man produced, left to itself in the steppes of Tartary, and guided only by its innate laws or by an instinctive power as wonderful as any within the realm of nature.' To quote an oriental saying:

> 'Arabic is science, Persian is sugar,
> Hindi is salt, Turki is art.'

The Mongol is also a familiar figure on this northern 563
road. His rough, good-natured, flat face and simple childish manner lend him the same attraction as that exercised by the Tibetan. He bears the stamp of the [221]
nomad and his means of livelihood are ranching and cattle-stealing. He always carries a knife at his belt,

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[1] This insurrection covered the period from 1862-1877.

563 but is not so quick to draw it as is the Turki, whose hand flies to the boot where his knife is concealed, as soon as there is word of a quarrel. He is a Buddhist, and shows small signs of progress, in contrast with the Islamic nomad tribes.

On close acquaintance the Kalmuk can be distinguished from other Mongol tribes. His home is in Karashahr, Ili, and in the Altai Mountains, and he is not infrequently met with in the streets of Urumchi.

The Qazaq, called by the Chinese 'Hasa,' is a Moslem
[291] nomad. He is never seen on foot, and wears a distinctive cap and high heels to his top-boots, We passed through Qazaqistan on our way to Russia, and shall have more to say later of this most interesting people. The Russians call them the 'Kirghiz'—a name which they have probably bestowed in order to distinguish from 'Cossack,' with which people the Qazaq has no connection. The Cossack proper is a *Russian subject*, who under the Tsarist system was endowed with special privileges, in return for which he was bound to give military service under definite conditions.

Occasionally we met with a whole family of fellow-travellers, so European in type, style, and manner as would have caused us no surprise had they addressed us in German, Italian, or Russian, instead of Turki.
[291] The men often wore Crimean whiskers, and the dress of the women and children came very near the Western, though all, even small children, wore top-boots. Their complexion was fair and their features refined and handsome in type. These were the 'Nogai,' whose name is taken from that of a Crimean Tartar leader of the thirteenth century. He led a victorious Mongol army into Europe, and brought back with him a large
[779] number of Christian prisoners. The Nogai are a Moslem people.

Perhaps the most interesting *rencontre* of any was with Manchurians from Kulja in Ili. They owe their territory to the Emperor Chien Lung, who, in the course of the campaign he conducted on the North-West frontier of China in the eighteenth century, gave grants of land as rewards for faithful service to loyal soldiers. The Manchurian language is thus still spoken in Ili, although it has vanished from Manchuria, and copies of the Scriptures transcribed into that language by George Borrow for the British and Foriegn Bible Society, and which had lain useless (as it was reckoned to be a dead language), at last found their way through Mr. Hunter into the hands of the people who were able to read them. These are the descendants of the ' Solon ' and ' Sibo ' referred to in the chronicles of Chien Lung as the troops who were rewarded for their faithfulness, with land in the new colony. Thus, remnants of each of the races which have successively held Dzungaria are still to be found within its borders. 563

In the beginning of the Christian era the Huns held supremacy in Central Asia, and in the thirteenth century the marauding tribes from Mongolia burst all barriers and carried the Mongol Empire from the Yellow River to the Danube. At this time Nestorian Christianity had considerable hold in Asia, and under Kublai and Jenghiz Khan the Franciscan missionaries were welcome and given facilities to carry on their work, but with the destruction of the Mongol Empire owing to the incessant attacks of the Chinese, Christianity declined, and, under the Chinese policy of isolation, the missionaries were expelled, while the converts, having no Scriptures in their own language, and being dependent upon tradition for the understanding of the faith they professed, became submerged by heathen practices and gradually disappeared. On the other 175 797 779

175 hand, Islamism, which had been temporarily repulsed
779 by the Mongols, again closed in, so that Turkestan
797 became one of the strongholds of the Moslem faith.

The trend of political events during the last few
186 years has resulted in movements no less epoch-making
than were the invasions of the Mongols and the Huns.
A wave of race-consciousness and of national enthusiasm
has swept over the peoples of Central Asia and caused
them to hearken to any voice which has promised to
secure them the liberty and self-determination they so
much covet. 'The East is undergoing a concentrated
process of adaptation which, with us, was spread over
centuries, and the result is not so much *evolution* as
revolution.'

000 The situation is pregnant with spiritual possibilities,
for the old and the new are struggling fiercely, and that
struggle will result in anarchy and lawlessness, unless
the hearts of men be captured and re-created by the
Christ Who alone makes men free.

797 The Church Militant is represented in the territor
stretching from Suchow to Siberia by *one* Missio
Station occupied by *two* men.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TRAVELLING IN THE 'GREAT HEAT'

132 THE trying season known to the Chinese as Ta Shu-
'Great Heat'—was upon us. Hami was indeed ho
and Mr. Hunter warned us that not until we reached t
other side of the Tian Shan could we hope for an
487 alleviation. From Hami two main trade-routes, know
as the Nan Lu—'South Road'—and Peh Lu—'Nor
Road'—run in the respective directions their nam

indicate. The former lies across Chinese Turkestan to 487
the south of the Tian Shan Range, passing by Kuche
and Aksu to Kashgar ; the latter, cutting through the
Tian Shan Range, runs along its northern side, through
Urumchi to the Ili Valley and Kulja. It was this
latter route that we followed.

Our cart was returned by the wheelwright fitted with 484
splendid new wheels, the mules were rested, and all promised 312
well for the next lap of the trail. A Chinese traveller's 133
proverb speaks of the long journey from Suchow
to Hami as ' unmitigated bitterness,' and of that which
still lay before us as a medium between the ' bitter and
the sweet.' Certain it was that we had reached the
end of most of the brackish water oases, and we found
that the plain which now lay before us was, in most
places, duly supplied with springs and wells of sweet
water. The three halts beyond Hami are known as
' the First, Second, and Third Stops,' and the traveller
is expected to do the three stages at a pull. However,
after eleven hours we only reached the second halt, and
refused to go further. The first night-stage on leaving
a resting-place was always particularly trying, coming
as it did after a busy day of final preparations and farewell
calls. There was no possibility of rest by day or
by night, and at the end of twenty-four hours we were
always dead beat.

' Second Halt ' was an attractive place, watered by a 361
rushing stream. The village was much larger than 312
those south of Hami, and there were apple trees laden 245
with nearly ripe fruit hanging over the walls of the
farms. After some hours of sleep, we got up to find the
courtyard invaded by a band of men travelling from 484
their homes in Shansi to their business in Kucheng.
They were all employees of a large firm, and by the 577
terms of their agreement were allowed to visit Shansi

484 577 once in five years. An unwritten law exacts that the journey south be taken in a cart with every appearance of affluence, lest fellow-townsmen should scoff and say: 'They went to "Kow Wai" to make a fortune, and have come back penniless vagrants!' A subtle appreciation of the ethics of filial piety has made it customary for the whole party when leaving home again to do so on foot, the suggestion being that every available dollar has been left with aged parents, and that the son starts out again a poor man to seek his fortune. The band was composed of eighteen youths, and one boy of fifteen who was nephew to the manager of the firm and had been entrusted by his uncle to the care of the older men. They had one donkey which carried a few bundles, and on which the lad was able to get a lift. Each one carried across his shoulder a flexible pole with a basket slung to either end, in one of which was his wadded quilt and a change of clothes, in the other a sack of flour and his bowl and chopsticks, while from the pole was also attached a little water can to carry a drink for the way. These men had tramped for over seventy days by track roads from central Shansi to the Yellow River, and from thence by the 'long grass route' to Ansi. This shortcut brought them across the north of Shensi and direct to the North-West territory, avoiding Lanchow. For several days we met them at each stage, and on the strength of being fellow-provincials we became exceedingly friendly. They told us that each man was allowed eighteen dollars (about £2) for road expenses, and by travelling very quickly and economically they were just able to do it for that amount.

486 'How did you get through Hsinghsinghsia?' we asked.

'We had return passports from the Governor when we left Kucheng last year,' they said, 'so they did not

dare to detain us, and the head of the firm had given 486
notice of the day we should cross the frontier; but we never knew a moment's peace till we were out of the hands of that gang. How different from General Feng's soldiers! We passed right through their fighting lines, and they never seized even our little donkey! The officer said, "These men are honest apprentices; they have a long journey ahead; no one is to touch them, their goods or their donkey!" That's something like an army!'

The following morning we reached 'Third Halt,' 361
which we found to be a torrid place, lying in a cup of 132
the hills. Our inn rooms were intolerably hot, and after a brief rest we got up and sat under the trees, hoping to escape from the flies, and also seize the advantage of any passing breeze. While resting there we heard the sound 492
of the familiar camel-bell, and looking up watched a string of sixty of these beasts cross the village stream. The banks were muddy, and the awkwardness of the camel when walking on slippery ground was evident. These beasts frequently come to grief when attempting to travel on other than sandy roads, and broken legs are not infrequent at a river's edge. The driver was a Barkul man, which city is colonised by Chinese, many of whom make their living by grazing camels. The Turki is of no use as a camel driver. He is too impetuous, and seems unable to give these animals the peculiar care which they need. Strong, long-lived, and enduring, as they are under good conditions, they easily lose heart, and once overdriven never recover. Rough treatment, hustle or untoward difficulties play havoc with these creatures, whose temperamental qualities seem to be as strange as their physical peculiarities. Once their spirit is broken they are of no further use, and lie down and die.

133 The next dawn found us at a beautiful spot called
312 Yatzchüan—'The Duck Pond.' It held a 'living spring,' that is to say, one in which the water is in constant motion, welling up from the sandy bed, sometimes with such force as to set the whole pond in ebullition. Every few minutes the depths were strongly disturbed, and a trembling column of sand would rise to the surface and then break in large bubbles. The oases through which we were passing were fed by the same water supply as that which irrigated the fields of Hami. It has been pointed out that the traveller must not allow himself to be deceived by the long, continuous blue line, indicating the flow of imaginary rivers connecting the ranges of the Barkul mountains and Karlik Tagh with visionary lakes. As a matter of fact, the water from the melted snows is lost in the gravel soil at the foot of these ranges, but reappears many miles away in such living springs as that by which we rested, or in a saline well in some depression of the desert. The Khan of Hami owns a house at this place, in which he stays when travelling on official business, and the caretaker allowed us the use of his rooms. They were clean and comfortable, but as bare as an inn. Near the front gate was his private mosque, decorated with a picture of Mecca. These buildings were throughout of mud, but the outer walls were yellow-washed, with a view of giving to the whole an imperial aspect.

133 On leaving the 'Duck Pond' we drove for twelve hours on a long, arid, stony, uphill stage, and shortly
[1:85] after sunrise arrived at an isolated inn. For several days each stage had brought us nearer to the foothills of the Barkul Range, and here we were so close that only three days' journey north-east divided us from the
133 town and lake of Barkul, both of which lie on the other
156 side of the Range. In these mountains are herds of wild

asses and of bronchos, reputed to be untameable. We [136] were now at an altitude of 5500 feet, and on the edge of 133 a bare plateau overlooking a depression to the south, 491 from which a road led off in the direction of Turfan. It was an ancient road, now in disuse, being considered too dangerous for caravans. The wind blows down this valley with such tremendous force that whole caravans have perished, the carts being blown to pieces and the men and beasts overwhelmed by the whirling sand. The innkeeper pointed out a spot called San Chien Fangtz—'The Three Rooms'—where eighteen carts laden with silver are said to have totally vanished. Acting as servant to this 000 innkeeper was a young man who greeted us with sheepish cordiality. 'You got away all right from Hsinghsinghsia,' he said, and he proved to be one of the men who had escaped on the rainy night of our stay there, and who had not been recaptured.

Leaving that afternoon, we saw a lizard differing [136] from any we had met with in other parts of the desert. It was about one and a half feet long, and was too quick for the carters, who chased it with their whips but failed to catch it. Continuing uphill between rocks, granite 361 boulders, and volcanic slopes, over a stony road, we 485 reached Chekuluchüan—'Cart Wheel Halt.' Of the three inns which formed this hamlet, two were untenanted and the third was badly broken down. Some of the rooms were roofless, while in others large holes had appeared in the walls, but having accomplished the short stage we were thankful to get rather longer hours of sleep than usual, and felt greatly refreshed by the cooler air of this quiet spot. The little row of inns 133 stood in a gorge between stony hills, and the force of 132 the gales through the narrow ravine was so great as to have worn the rocks into hollows, in the depths of which

133 birds had made their nests. This was the most striking
132 example of wind-erosion that we saw.

This last stage had been taken in company with Mr.
494 Hunter, whose little cart frequently made better stages
than our heavy vehicles could manage. At this point
491 we were all needing small repairs to our carts, and also
the stony roads had become very heavy on the shoes of
our teams, but Mr. Hunter now produced a travelling
farrier's outfit, and with the help of his man shod the
mules, greatly to the admiration of the Chinese bystanders,
who commented freely on the resourcefulness
563 of this experienced traveller. Mr. Hunter's man was a
Mongolian youth, called 'Nimga.' The Living Buddha,
to whom he was subject, had given him as an orphan
boy to the missionaries. He always slept where he
could watch the horses, and on one occasion, when he
felt certain that horse-stealers were prowling around,
lay down on a horse's back and slept there. His
horsemanship was splendid, accustomed as he was to
riding from infancy.

609 The Turki innkeeper, a tall, lean, bearded Moslem, looked with some suspicion at this party of foreigners. 'What have they come for?' he asked Mr. Hunter. 'Is it bones, plants or game that they want?' 'Nothing of the kind,' was the answer, 'these are missionaries.'

'Oh, that's different,' he grunted, 'but some of those who come, why there's no knowing what they want! There was a man here once upon a time, and his servant told me that he came to Chekulu in order to measure the distance to the sun! A likely tale! Couldn't he measure it in his own country? Surely you can *sometimes* see the sun in Western lands?'

491 For four hours that evening we descended a smooth,
137 downhill road, and on reaching the plain entered a
sandy basin about twenty miles across, the lower part

[FACING p. 230]

A GOBI INN.

"There was a foreigner here once who said he had come to Chekulu to measure the distance to the sun. A likely tale!"

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485

491 of which was full of tamarisk mounds. Many of these
stood twenty feet high, and here, as everywhere in the
137 desert, each plant was raised on a mound accumulated
round its roots, this being the soil blown by the wind
from some more fertile region. Among the tamarisks
were plants of Saksaul (*Anabasis Ammodendron*), whose
contorted stems, grey cracked bark, green plumes of
small greyish leaves, and pink fruit differentiated them
from the more feathery species. It has been computed
that these tamarisk hills may be from 500 to 1000
years old. The trunks of a forest of dead poplars stood
beyond, and added a final touch to the desolation of
the scene.

361 Tsikioking—' The Seven Cornered Well '—stands in
the sandy basin, and is now a place of some importance,
[205] boasting a small Government Official who also controls
[487] the post-office. It is here that the roads divide which
lead from Hami to Turfan, and Hami to Kucheng. We
[206] were following the latter, but the telegraph wire went
via Turfan to Urumchi. Great as was our desire to see
Turfan—a most interesting locality—we realised that it
was scarcely safe to enter such a hot area at midsummer.
[132] We were warned that at this season people were dying
from heat, and that the inhabitants protected them-
[342] selves by spending the hours from sunrise to sunset in
underground cave dwellings. The Turfan depression
descends to two hundred feet below sea-level, and
presents conditions most favourable to agriculture but
almost insupportable to man. Tsikioking is better
372 supplied with fuel than any of the surrounding oases,
and in winter its population is increased by families
who move here for those months. The best fuel known
in the desert is the root of the tamarisk. It is of dark
hard wood which, chopped into small pieces and sun-
dried looks like coal, and has a great deal of its burning

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

372 qualities. Several of the desert plants and roots supply fuel of fair quality, but in most places the people are dependent on animal droppings, cow dung being the best variety since, well dried, it gives out a glowing heat.

647 A visit to the Official brought us once more into the tragic conditions of Yamen life. A young man, with signs of the opium habit upon him, received us with the usual Chinese courtesy, and introduced his wife, who was a nice-looking and self-respecting girl; but there were other women in the household of such a character as must have made existence in Tsikioking a living death to her.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THROUGH THE CELESTIAL MOUNTAINS

133
491 At Tsikioking we were within a few miles of the outer foothills of the Tian Shan, which, on the next stage, we were to traverse from south to north. No sign of the Pass, however, was evident, and it was not until we had covered the first few miles of gently rising ground that we found the road took a sudden turn, and we then quickly entered the mouth of a narrowing gorge. At the entrance to the ravine the yellow sand was piled up on the windward side of the rocks to the height of several hundred feet, but as we advanced naked blackness met the eye on every side, and from here on, a rift through the black rocks sliced a road right across the Celestial Range to the plain of Dzungaria.

For nine hours we followed a narrow path, the gradient rising so evenly as to be scarcely noticeable. The high rocks on either side were absolutely denuded, and of perpendicular strata. Great naked crags towered 133 above us, and in some parts the side of the mountain 491 was cut clean through as with a gigantic knife. Our previous experience of mountain passes had led us to expect a road which must rise and fall with the course of the mountain, and we were greatly astonished when, hour after hour, we still pursued a course with no semblance of a hill. The rugged grandeur of the scene was most impressive. On either side the loose boulders were flung in wild confusion, though never blocking the path so as to make it impassable to the carts.

As the night wore on the constant winding of the Pass, in which we could never see more than a few hundred feet ahead owing to its tortuous nature, made the stage seem interminable. It appeared as though, after so many hours, the next turn *must* bring an opening to view, but once again the road twisted and vanished round yet another corner. Suddenly, without warning, [485] we emerged, and saw in the brilliant moonlight the inn of Towshui—' Head Spring '—which was a welcome sight indeed.

During the winter months this gorge is closed by the snow, and many travellers have been lost in the drifts caused by the sweeping of the winds round the sharp corners ; the optional road via Turfan has then to be taken. The only signs of life in these desolate, barren, [136] stony chasms were the birds of prey which hovered overhead. A Chinese traveller told us that once, when eating a wayside lunch in the gorge, he turned his head aside for an instant, and like lightning an eagle swept past, taking the bread from his hand.

From Towshui to the next inn, which is Tashitow— [485] ' The Great Stone '—the road led over the watershed dividing Chinese Turkestan from Dzungaria. We drove over undulating downs, and as we descended the other

133 slope met some rough descents over granite slabs. As
we gradually came in view of the northern slopes of the
491 Tian Shan we found the barren, stony face, typical of
the south side of this range, exchanged for wooded
slopes, while the sandy wastes gave way to short,
grassy turf and scrub.

361 Tashitow, though small, is a place of some importance.
Geographically its position is notable, standing as it
487 does on the Dzungarian slopes of the great watershed.
From here also is a foot-track to Barkul, and a short cut
over the mountains to Turfan, whilst yet another road
leads in fifteen days to Uliassutai. It boasts three inns,
and a temple with a lake and spring of water, which
though sweet was very turbid. The temple is built
against a bare rock of a shining black formation, as
though it had been polished with blacklead. We
491 followed a good road from Tashitow past Sankochüan—
'Three Springs'—to Muleiho—'Stacked Wood Stream.'
It was midnight on Friday when we reached this town,
361 where we were to spend Sunday. We passed down a
long street between closed shops, under the frontage of
which lay sleeping merchants, doubtless unable to
endure the heat of the rooms. Mr. Hunter was ahead
of us, and Nimga was waiting to direct us to our inn,
which was the only one where rooms were available.
He carried in his hand a great bunch of the small,
seedless grapes from Turfan—a welcome sight, for we
485 had tasted no fruit since Hami. The inn court, as well
as the street, was full of sleeping men, and the landlord's
welcome was far from encouraging: 'There are rooms
all right,' he said, 'but no one attempts to sleep in them
at this season.' Then, turning to our servant, he
uttered the one word: 'Bugs'!

There was no alternative, so we spread a macintosh
sheet on the *kang* and then lay down, leaving the candle

lighted, as the most sure means of keeping unwelcome 485
guests at bay. The tins of Keating's powder, which
we had on order, had failed us with the other stores, but
even had we secured them, nothing can finally circumvent
these insects, which creep along the rafters and
drop from the ceiling on to the hapless victim beneath!
We were soon fast asleep, but at dawn a still worse
plague faced us, for the walls were black with loathsome
flies, and not one moment's peace did we know throughout
our Sabbath rest in Muleiho.

The little town was in the proud position of having 634
been lately raised to the civic status of a '*hsien*' city,
in consequence of which it now had its own Resident
Civil Magistrate, whose new Yamen had just been
erected.

A wooden bridge spanned the wide river which 491
rushed by the city wall, and here the inhabitants were
wont to gather in the cool of the day, at the hour when
all the animals of the city were led down to be watered.

The arable land was extensive and splendidly 241
irrigated, and there was every sign of prosperity. 312
Strings of little donkeys, driven by Turki vendors, 443
constantly passed our inn door laden with baskets of
grapes from Turfan. The large black and white grapes
were not yet ripe, but the small seedless variety was
plentiful and cheap. This is the kind from which the
Turfan sultana is produced in such abundance.

A band of children, with whom we made friends, took 136
us up to a court in the Yamen buildings to see a red
deer, which had been caught young in the mountains 278
and was being reared in captivity. Its antlers were
particularly fine, and we noticed that all the medicine
shops of Muleiho were decorated with splendid specimens
of such antlers, which are highly valued for
medicinal purposes.

640 The chief interest of the town, to us, was the presence of two elderly men, brothers, who thirty years ago moved here from Hsiaoi in the Province of Shansi. They were Christians, having been converted from idolatry by the preaching of a Chinese pastor, Hsi by name, a Confucian scholar of repute, who became a devoted Christian, and was the first ordained Chinese minister of the Shansi Church.[1] From the time of their arrival they never made a secret of their Christian profession, and every Sunday the shop is closed. Divine service is conducted in the back premises by the elder brother, and all apprentices are required to attend. On Sunday morning the small Christian community gathered in the back shop for worship. The room had been swept, dusted, and polished for the occasion. The traditional Shansi hymns were sung to the traditional tunes, and these good men sat down with us after service to a traditional Shansi meal. Listening to their Shansi *patois*, it was hard to believe that we were not back in our own Province, as it was thirty years ago.

132 On Sunday afternoon the Tian Shan were enveloped in threatening, inky-black clouds, such as indicate a tremendous storm in the mountains, but the rain did not reach us until 10 p.m. Every arrangement had been made for a midnight start. Our carts were packed, and we had lain down in them for a little rest before leaving. No sooner had we done so than the storm burst, and the rain poured down until 6 a.m. By this time the courtyard was an indescribable mass of soaked rubbish, the pigs wallowed in pools of water, and it was impossible to cross from one side to the other.

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[1] See *Life of Pastor Hsi*, by Mrs. Howard Taylor: *Fulfilment of a Dream*, by Mildred Cable.

We left Muleiho as soon as the weather permitted.
Our Shansi friends were round early to see how we had 172
fared, and to bring us a parting present of a slab of
brick-tea, one foot wide by one and a half feet long, and
two inches thick—a most decorative object, being
stamped with handsome patterns. Brick-tea is much
used in the North-West. A small chunk is broken off
and boiled in a kettle of water, making an infusion
which is of a pale colour and nearly tasteless. The
bricks are made from the used leaves of the tea-shops,
sun-dried and pressed into a cake.

The next two days took us past Chitai—'Great
Height'—where we stayed in the suburb, the town 361
itself being nothing but a mass of ruins inside a good 751
castellated wall. We took our next stage by day,
crossing the area which had received the full force of
the cloud-burst on Sunday night. On every hand
we saw the traces of the havoc wrought. Bridges were
swept away, trees uprooted and crops ruined, and we
were told that a large number of cattle had been
drowned, as the rushing mountain torrent burst its
bounds and had overtaken the herds before their owners
could get them to a place of safety. From Chitai we
came to Kucheng—'Ancient City'—which unlike Hami 361
is not surrounded on all sides with fertile land, but is [133]
approached over a wide, sandy and treeless plain.
From out of the howling wilderness we stepped direct
into a large town, which appeared to us a veritable
metropolis. Many large shops showed a splendid
assortment of such glittering wares as the Chinese love— 366
china cups and teapots, perfumes and scented soap, 443
silks and cottons, clocks and hair-clasps. The tailors
sat at their shop doors working Singers' sewing-machines, 463
the Moslem bakers piled the hot rolls on counters as
they drew them out of the brick oven, and the vege-

366 tables were finer even than those of Hami. One street
was given up to the furriers, who worked in rather
443 showy but inferior skins, the best quality not finding
its way to Kucheng. Another street held the silver-
463 smiths, while here and there a photographer or watch-
maker advertised himself as being the branch shop of a
Peking firm. The whole business quarter was gay and
prosperous, but the Turki shops were fewer in number
and inferior to the Chinese. The importance of Kucheng
487 lies in the fact that it is situated at the terminus of the
361 great desert trade-route to Peking, which passes by the
439 Yellow River to Paotowchen and Kweihwating. These
two important marts of North Shansi are 1500 miles
from Kucheng, and the camel caravans habitually
travel to and fro carrying the highly-prized bazaar
wares over the desert. In normal times the camels are
always on the move, though they may take from
three to six months to accomplish the journey, but
at the time of our visit this route was closed owing
to the activity of the War Lords. We were told that
whereas before 1914 the British and German goods were
the most highly valued on the market, at the present
time Russian and Japanese wares had superseded them.
It was interesting to find, however, that the Moslem
woman's veil which we desired to buy bore a stamp in
the corner: 'Made in Manchester.' We stayed in a
Mohammedan inn, where we had the immediate *entrée*
to the women's quarters, in which our landlord's
wives lived in seclusion. The family was very strict
77 in its observance of Islamic rites, and five times a day
the prayer-hour was observed. Every morning before
sunrise and at evening twilight a long and elaborate
liturgy was recited by the head of the house. The
purifications which preceded the prayer entailed a
washing of face, hands, arms and feet in running water.

Where a stream is not accessible, the water is poured 779
from the purification pot. Many were the prostrations and different attitudes taken by the worshipper as he lifted his hands to the back of his ears, then bowed, rose, and bowed again towards Mecca. In the evening the children were all gathered together for the reading of the Koran and the study of Arabic, and, incidentally, to learn how superior were the followers of the Prophet to the rest of mankind.

Our first caller was a Military Official who had 262
become a Christian during his stay at Urumchi. His 574
visit was followed by the arrival of servants carrying trays of the best food the restaurants of Kucheng could produce. Piled up on brazen plates was the Turki national dish of 'pillau.' It was composed of rice steamed and fried, and flavoured with chopped mutton, carrots and onions, sultanas and spices, and laid on the top were joints of roast fowl. This was accompanied by large, thin, flat cakes of bread and plates of fruit, while more servants followed with fodder and grain for our mules. Later on this gentleman's mother called and asked us to her house, where she most kindly entertained us. The food supply of Kucheng was so good that during the length of our stay we were able to luxuriate in milk, fruit, fresh bread, and good mutton.

Our next visitors were the band of Shansi men with whom we had become so friendly *en route*. It was difficult to recognise in the well-dressed gentleman who sent in his card the pedestrian traveller who had carried his own bundle and water can. They were most eager to know if Kucheng reached the expectations formed from their descriptions of its glories. Here, as elsewhere, we found no difficulty of access to the homes of both Chinese and Turki, and we never went out without receiving cordial invitations to visit well-off families in their comfortable houses.

601 in their comfortable houses. We bore witness in Kucheng, and then passed on.

CHAPTER XL

KUCHENG TO URUMCHI

494 BEFORE we left Suchow, relying on the correctness of travellers' information, we had comforted ourselves with the thought that Kucheng was to see the end of the most tedious part of our journey. 'The Governor's Express Cart Service takes you over six stages in a day and a half, that is, by travelling straight through, and only stopping long enough to change horses,' had said an enthusiastic native of Urumchi, but after many years' experience of Chinese roads we had ventured to doubt the possibility of maintaining this speed without broken bones and heads. 'Roads! but you have never seen any approaching those of "Kow Wai." Why, they are as smooth as the top of this table!' had been the answer. Therefore, nothing doubting, we had informed Mr. Hunter that when we reached Kucheng we intended going on by Express Cart, leaving the men to follow more slowly; but he shook his wise head, saying: 'I would not take such a risk if I were you! Do not fix anything until you have seen the style of the mail coach. *I* would not endanger *my* life in one of those contraptions.' We pressed the matter no further, especially as our Chinese escort had stared in blank amazement at the very notion of hiring a seat in one cart when we were already going to the expense of places in another, and he had added: 'A few more days on the road, what does it matter? Even a week more or less on a long journey is of little importance.'

When we were about one mile from the gate of Kucheng, 494
a yell was heard, and our men hastily drew up, saying, '*Kwai che lai liao*'—the Express is coming! and in a swirl of dust, and with a wild jingle of many harness bells, three long-limbed, bony horses galloped madly past under the lash of the driver, who, having just caught sight of the town entrance, was bringing his team through the city gate and up the main street at a pace calculated to impress the populace! It was then that we saw the body of the cart was simply made of long poles lashed together, on which two passengers, clinging to the framework, were being hurled from side to side by the violence of the jolting. One glance at the 'Express' quickly satisfied us that such a mode of travel, while excellent for postal parcels, would be hideous torture to ordinary human beings if nerves formed any part of their anatomy, while some might scarcely survive the fifty-four hours of this frenzied mode of dispatch.

From Kucheng onwards it was no longer necessary to 484
make night stages. Hot as it was, the animals stood it 312
well, as each midday brought us to a wayside foodshop, where we were able to get something for ourselves and water for the mules, and the nights were now spent in towns of some importance. The direction of the road was south-west, as we had reached our most northerly point at Kucheng, and we were now following the line of the Tian Shan towards the dip which marks the
position of Urumchi. The highest peak of this part of 133
the Tian Shan was now coming into sight, the great Bogdo-ola—'The Mount of God'—which rises twenty thousand feet, and is seen from a great distance. This summit, with its surrounding peaks, is of a grand and rugged shape, and lends distinction to the country which would be insignificant were it not for this arresting

[133] feature. The first night after Kucheng we slept at Tsimusa—' The City of Everlasting Trust '—and seeing 486 a military guard at the gate we knew that an officer would shortly call for our passports. On this occasion, however, the innkeeper failed to inform the authorities of the arrival of foreigners, and when the soldiers came to demand our papers they were exceedingly angry, and threatened him with a beating if he neglected this part of his duty again. The upshot of the fuss was that the innkeeper spent the whole night in raging and cursing officials, foreigners, passports, and soldiers alike, vowing that no ' foreign devil ' should again darken his doors! To judge by the experience of this and other journeys in Kansu and Turkestan, it is of the greatest importance that travellers' passports should be in strict order, and up-to-date. We were required to produce these documents at the most unlikely places, and sometimes they were examined both on entering and on leaving a city, as well as at the Yamen. We were thankful to quit the ' Inn of the Cursing Landlord ' at 5 a.m. and proceed on our journey towards Santai—' The Third Stage.' 133 The road took us for seventy *li* over grassy steppes, 241 and for the last fifteen *li* we drove by rapid streams between fields of maize and sorgum, bordered by hedges and shaded by overhanging trees. The whole scene, apart from the nature of the crops, might have been an English rural landscape, and it warmed our hearts as we thought of the pleasures of soon wandering in English lanes and fields.

484 We were feeling the fatigue of our long journey much more severely now that we were enduring the added strain of great heat, and though the night stages were at an end, such a diary entry as: ' Rose at 2-30 a.m. and took a very heavy, hot stage,' speaks for itself. 492 The carters also were suffering from the prolonged

fatigue, and were wont to vent their irritation on the 492 mules. We had an interesting lesson in animal psychology when one of the drivers went a little too far in beating a mule, whose feelings he injured more than its body. It quietly went on strike, and though it walked with the team, yet kept the traces so slack as to bring no ' pull ' upon the cart. The Chinese understood the situation at once. ' It's temper is up ! ' they said, ' and we must take it out of the traces and walk it for a bit.' This they did, but the animal did not recover itself until it had been ridden for a few hours, received an extra feed, and been petted. After this acknowledgment of unjust treatment, it recovered its ' face,' and went to work again ! Little Molly always held herself aloof from the common herd, only associating with her own shaft-mule. Her spirit was splendid, and she pulled with an energy that was foreign to the baser sort. Both men and beasts were needing the long rest which lay before them at Urumchi.

We had been without the guiding telegraph wire ever 206 since we parted from it at Tsikioking, but at Kucheng we met with it once more, and we were glad of its indication over the rolling steppes which we now so frequently crossed. A new feature of the road was the 493 little Ili Valley cart, of a build unfamiliar to us. The fact that it had four wheels gave it a Western look, for all Chinese carts, large or small, are built on two wheels, and this new structure was unknown to most of our party, who were as delighted as children to see this departure from the agelong, traditional vehicle.

Leaving Santai, an hour's drive brought us to the 361 site of the original town of that name, now a mass of 669 crumbling ruins, one more reminder of the havoc and desolation wrought by the Moslem rebellion in 1862–1877. Ruined villages, hamlets and farmsteads, mark

361 the route taken by the hordes of the Tungan rebels, as
669 they marched from South Kansu to Turkestan, mercilessly exterminating the Chinese population, razing their villages to the ground, and carrying off many of the women and boys as trophies of war.

485 Leaving the little '*hsien*' city of Fukang—'The Mound of Peace'—we realised with delight that only one more night in an inn lay between us and the Mission Compound in Urumchi, where we should find a bed, sheets, bathing facilities in the place of the small tin basin which we carried, and the possibilities of getting our clothes washed. At Kumuti—'Ancient Pastures' we were but twenty miles from the city, but when it was suggested that we should only take a brief rest and then press on, we felt that we simply could not do it.
[563] The best room in the inn was occupied by a Nogai gentleman, whom we had met two years previously in Ansi. Unfamiliar as we were then with Asian tribes, we had mistaken him for a pure Russian, and therefore had been much puzzled when he told us that he was a Moslem. His horse was ready saddled, as he was leaving for the capital, which he could reach by nightfall, and he was glad to be the first to announce our whereabouts. The name of Kumuti, meaning 'Ancient Pastures' indicates that in olden days the flocks and herds of the Uigur chiefs were grazed in this place.

000 Dawn saw us again on the road, thrilled at the prospect of so soon seeing the great capital of Sinkiang, on which our thoughts has so often centred as we pictured the base from which Mr. Hunter and Mr. Mather had carried on their missionary operations for so many years. Mr. Mather had now been in China for sixteen years without taking any furlough, and considerable pressure had been brought to bear upon him to return for a short period to England. This,

however, he could not consider unless a companion were 000
forthcoming who would stay with Mr. Hunter during his absence. A volunteer was found in Mr. Ridley, of Sining, in Kansu, who had, we knew, recently arrived in Urumchi to take over Mr. Mather's work, and thus release him for furlough; and this being so, we had mutually agreed to travel together from Urumchi to Europe. We had never yet met him, but five miles from the city both gentlemen appeared on horseback to greet us, Mr. Mather welcoming us as the first fellow-countrywomen he had seen for twelve years!

We soon came in sight of the city, which was well 486
wooded, and arrived at the Outer Gate, where soldiers, as usual, demanded our passports. 'Have you met any lamas by the way?' they enquired. 'We have been expecting some for several days, and you must have seen them on the road.' No one ever gives any information when officially questioned, so we simply changed the subject, knowing, notwithstanding, that they must be referring to the party of Tibetans who left Hsinghsinghsia with us, and whom we had passed and repassed all the way. As we moved on, information was imparted to our servants that the guard were under orders to seize the whole party of priests, and conduct them to the prison, as they were accused of being undesirable characters; and two days later, to prison they went.

The streets of Urumchi impressed us as being irregular, 363
narrow, lacking in architectural beauty, crowded and
dirty. We had lost sight of Mr. Hunter several hours 000
previously, but as we drew up to the Mission House, there he stood in the doorway to receive us. The white home-spun cotton had vanished and he now wore his best black suit, and a black soft felt hat, while the clumsy traveller's boots were replaced by well-polished

800 leather shoes ; the turn-down collar and black tie also gave the needed touch to the figure which was transformed into that of a Scotch divine. As master of the house he did not wish us to reach his home when he was not there in suitable attire to receive us. The whole episode was charming, as was also the courtly manner in which he bade us welcome to Urumchi.

Here we entered a compound quite unlike any of the scores of mission premises we had previously visited. Three small self-contained two-storeyed houses stood in different parts of the enclosure, one being inhabited by Mr. Hunter, another by Mr. Mather, while the third (which was quite new and had never been occupied) was set aside for our use. There were fine stabling and spacious hay lofts ; the flat mud roof was accessible and enabled one to get a good view of the city ; a new, roomy church was entered from the street, and a row of Chinese guest-rooms completed the buildings. Here was luxury indeed ! A table for meals in place of a newspaper-covered *kang* with bowl and chopsticks ; a shut door ensuring privacy ; a bed, a lamp, a jug and basin, a cup and saucer instead of an earthenware bowl, while mosquito-netted windows excluded all flies, and we contemplated the possibility of a quiet night away from the sounds of champing mules and cursing landlords.

It was delightful, quite beyond anything we had imagined, and yet the simplicity of the house and life of its inhabitants was austere in the extreme. And there was no lack of pleasant company, for these good and kindly men were each specialists in their own way. There was not a question we asked (and we were perfect terrors at asking !) concerning Turkestan, its localities, its geographical peculiarities, the sociology, languages, or tribal customs, to which one or other failed to give us an intelligent and instructive answer. On the shelves of Mr. Hunter's study stood presentation copies of books by all the best-known travellers in, and writers on, Central Asia. But most impressive of all were the facts, which gradually emerged, concerning the translation work done by these missionaries during the winter months, when they were unable to travel owing to the intense cold. Mr. Mather had completed the translation of a Mongolian dictionary, which he was making every effort to transcribe before leaving for Europe. There was also a Manchurian-Russian Grammar and Dictionary awaiting translation when he should have time to undertake it. This versatile scholar, whose passion for work is insatiable, would not be baffled by the very great difficulties which faced him when he tried to secure a Mongol teacher. Being summoned to the prison to give medical treatment to an inmate, he had made the acquaintance of a bilingual Mongolian willing to teach him, the only trouble being that as the teacher was confined in a cage, the young Englishman had to receive permission to sit by his tutor also inside the bars, and thus he had his first lessons in the Mongolian tongue! A small mimeograph stood in the corner of Mr. Hunter's study, by means of which he had printed the early copies of the Gospels in the Turki language, as well as the Pilgrim's Progress, and Scripture portions in the Qazaq tongue. It was not until we reached London and visited a famous oriental bookshop, that we knew of his own translation of Turki folklore—an original mimeographed copy of which we purchased for the sum of seven shillings.

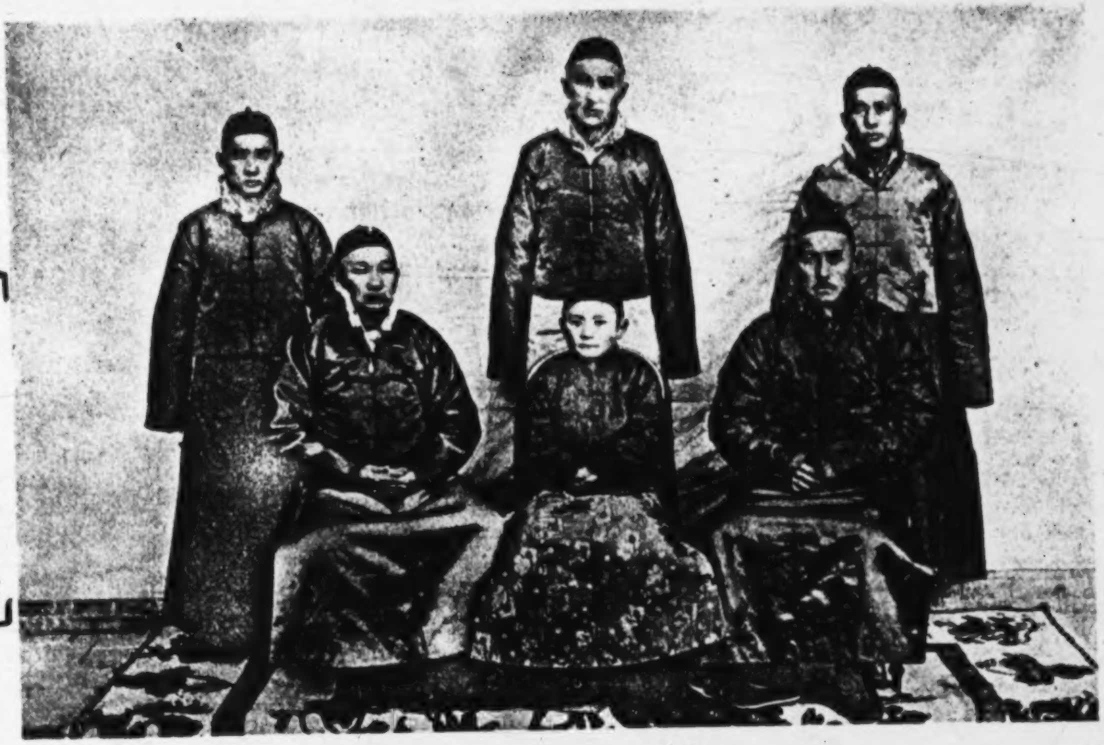
CHAPTER XLI

THE CAPITAL OF SINKIANG

175 Urumchi first comes into historical prominence under the name of 'Bishbalik,' the capital of the kingdom established by the Uigurs in southern Dzungaria. Driven out from their first home in the northern part of this province, they wandered south until they found a resting place on the slopes of the Celestial Mountains, and also in the watered land as far as Hami, which territory they transformed so as to make of it the fertile district which it is to-day. The middle of the eighteenth century marks the period, when under the great Emperor Chien Lung, Chinese ascendency finally asserted itself in Dzungaria.

487 Urumchi is situated at the junction of four great
trade routes. One crossing Mongolia, another leading
175 through Hami to Kansu, a third connecting it with
361 Ili and Russia, and a fourth with Kashgar. It thus
occupied a position obviously suited to make it the capital of the New Dominion, called by the Chinese 'Sinkiang.' The city has been the battle-ground of many contending forces, having been taken and retaken by Mongols, Chinese and Mohammedans, while during the great Mohammedan rebellion in 1865 it is estimated that 130,000 Chinese were murdered in the vicinity. The word 'Urumchi' is of Mongolian origin; to the Chinese the town is known as 'Tihwa,' but colloquially it is referred to as 'Hungmiaotz'—'The Red Temple.'
[312] It is well supplied with water, and with coal of various
qualities, and is in easy communication with Manas,
[438] from which it draws grain, especially rice; with
439 Turfan which helps to supply it with fruit, and with

[Facing p. 248]



A GROUP OF MONGOLIAN RULERS.

The central figure is the child who is hereditary Ruler of the Kalmuks. Seated on either side are the two highest Living Buddhas in Mongolia.

To face page 248.

439 Russia which provides it with manufactured goods, and
its own most noted product is sulphur.

363 The streets of Urumchi present a mass of low, formless,
utilitarian buildings, covering a large area. The
344 Governor's Yamen, which occupies a large enclosure,
contains spacious courtyards dominated by a high
tower, from which the surrounding country can be
surveyed. Second in importance to the Government
buildings is the new Post Office, constructed with a
view to dealing with large quantities of mail material.
205 The postal system is excellently controlled, and for
many years the position of Postal Commissioner has
been held by a Westerner, who, at the time of our visit,
was an Italian. Thanks to energetic organisation, the
enforcement of a time limit on the couriers, and the
careful division of the road into well-regulated stages,
Urumchi is brought within forty-five days of Peking—
a truly marvellous accomplishment. The direct postal
communication with Europe via Chuguchak, Semipalatinsk,
and Omsk was suspended during the war,
but is now once more available, by which means letters
206 can reach London in twenty-eight days. There is a
wireless installation in daily communication with
Kashgar, but this is under the strict supervision of the
Governor. The Russo-Asiatic Bank formerly had a
471 branch office here, and a few Western firms have opened
agencies through which they now carry on business.

563 The stream of *emigrés* who left Russia at the time of
361 the Revolution, have had an important bearing on the
development of Urumchi, which has resulted in the
formation of a Russian quarter. Here the impoverished
[648] refugee, the Nogai, and the Sart live side by side, and of
recent years the Soviet Government has appointed a
Consul General to guard their interests. Permission to
erect a statue of Lenin in the Consular grounds has been

563 refused by the Chinese authorities, as also a suggestion
that the building of the Russian Orthodox Church
361 should be turned into a theatre. In the shops of this
quarter there may be bought Russian bread, cakes and
biscuits; also Russian boots, foreign cloth and galvanised
pails and buckets of all kinds.

366 In another part of the town are streets of good
Chinese shops, and here every variety of tinned food
can be purchased, at prices which amply compensate
the merchant for his trouble in the transit. The
563 Urumchi crowd presents special features which to us
492 were of absorbing interest. We were in a country
where horsemanship is highly valued. The Mongol,
Tibetan, Qazaq and Tungan are all splendid riders,
though each has his own unmistakable style of handling
a horse, and his own way of controlling it. The
Russians and Siberians use Russian horses—fine-skinned,
tall, and elegant—in contrast with the rough,
shaggy Mongol pony, or the half tamed steed of the
Tungan, who loves to gallop down the narrow streets,
563 scattering the populace as he goes. It was now that
391 we became familiar with the Qazaq—a broad-shouldered
man, whose burly build is exaggerated by the wadded or
492 fur garments he wears both summer and winter alike.
His home-made, high-heeled, tall leather boots were
different in cut from those of the Mongolian, and his
head-gear is a high-pointed cap, with a circular flap
over each ear and on the shoulders. He was often seen
riding a bullock, whose enormous flanks were surmounted
by a small, wooden saddle, held in place by a
563 wide girth. When shopping he seldom dismounted,
but conducted his bargaining from his seat, and though
437 he might know nothing of the Chinese language, the
price was fixed by means of movements of the fingers,
the buyer and seller each introducing his hand up the
other's sleeve.

000 other's sleeve. The Qazaq woman frequently accom-
291 panied her husband, dressed in her best black quilted coat, and wearing a white cotton headdress swathed round the chin with a kind of gorget which becomingly framed the broad tanned face.

364 Our excursions round the town led us in every direction through rough and muddy streets. The weather was hot and the flies innumerable. This was a natural consequence of the season, which was that of the ripe melon, and the habit of the populace which was to buy a slice, eat the pulp, and then throw the rind away by the roadside. In some places the mounds of discarded peel reached to the eaves of the low houses, while dense swarms of flies buzzed gaily around.
[312] The wells were all flush with the ground, and we were never allowed to drink water which had been drawn from them. A wide rapid river flows outside the city, and is surmounted by an imposing rocky cliff, on which stands a pagoda. Beyond this are the trees of the Governor's park, which enclosure contains a life-sized statue of himself. The character of the masses
536 of the Chinese population is distinctly different from
636 that of the large towns within the Great Wall. These are colonials, and inevitably differ from the dwellers in the homeland, even though tenaciously adhering to its every manner and custom. On arrival, according to etiquette, a formal call was paid to the Governor's wife, by whom we were very graciously received. Governor Yang also came in, sat down with us, and talked on many subjects. He asked several questions concerning the journey we had taken, and showed great interest in the educational work which we had accom-
636 plished in Shansi. The policy of this strong autocratic ruler is that of complete segregation of his people
20 from the turbulent nations which surround them. To

636 20 this end he allows no newspaper to be published in his territory, and the postal, telegraph and wireless offices are under the control of his appointed censors. News from the outside world filters through but slowly, and 636 all restaurants are posted with the announcement: [579] '*No political discussions allowed.*' It is certainly to Governor Yang's credit that the roads of Turkestan are notably free from brigandage, and during the past decade of civil war in China, Turkestan has remained [648] peaceful. At the time of our visit the whole Yamen was busy with preparations for the journey to be shortly taken by the Governor's son and suite to the town of Zaisan in Russian territory, where the young man had been appointed Chinese Consul.

680 We were the first British women who had ever visited Urumchi, and our application for passports to cross the Russian frontier at Kuswun created a precedent. Three years previously some of our boxes were stolen from a Kansu inn, and our British passports were lost with them. The papers with which we now travelled were passports written in the Chinese language, and issued by the Chinese Foreign Office and British Consul in Hankow. These documents refer to us by our Chinese names only. We had early made application for permits to travel across Russia, which request had been forwarded to Moscow by the Soviet Consul in Urumchi, and on the day after our arrival word came that this permission was granted, when we immediately presented ourselves to make personal application for a visa. This was duly affixed to the Chinese passport, and all possible help and information with a view to making the journey easy was given to us by the Consular Staff.

The weeks of our stay were very happy and interesting and the time passed only too quickly ere arrangements had to be considered for undertaking that portion of 000 our long journey which still stretched in front. From Suchow to Urumchi we had already traversed one thousand five hundred miles, but seven hundred more miles still lay between us and Chuguchak, which is the last city in China, before crossing the Russian border. It was therefore necessary for us to buy as many Russian roubles as we should require, and in this we received assistance from the Chinese postmaster. The 493 remainder of the road-journey now could best be taken in a Russian *tarantass*—a long, fourwheeled, springless cart, harnessed in Siberian style, with three horses abreast, and a gaily painted wooden hoop fastened to the shafts and standing high over the middle horse's head, to which several bells are attached. This mode of travel is far quicker than by Chinese cart, so we decided to sell all our mules (except, of course, Molly) together with both the carts, and proceed by the said hired tarantass. And now it was our turn to comb our 000 mules' manes, plait our mules' tails and send them bravely forth to the horse fair wearing handsome, borrowed saddles, but with the proud knowledge that *we* had no sore backs to hide, and no underfed beasts to palm off on the unsuspecting purchasers! In due course all our animals were sold, while preparations were completed for our further travelling on to Chuguchak.

CHAPTER XLII

THROUGH FLY-LAND IN A TARANTASS

Our departure was fixed for Thursday, August 26th, 494 but the obstinate Turki driver, whose cart we had hired, was determined to force us to travel with a cavalcade

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AF1

494 of his friends who would not leave until Saturday. He therefore removed a wheel from the tarantass on the plea of necessary repairs, and by Friday at midday the wheelwright had not yet finished his job. It was only under the strong pressure brought by Mr. Hunter, who refused to leave the workshop until the wheel was mended, that Friday afternoon saw the empty tarantass rattle over the rough road and draw up at the side door of the Mission Compound.

000 Our personal luggage was very little, knowing, as we did, that when we reached the Siberian railway we must not carry more than regulation weight. We were also advised not to take books, papers, letters, nor photographs into Russia. Our cameras, consequently, were left behind, as also our organ, and all personal effects beyond a hand-valise each, and a wadded quilt for bedding. It was well for Mr. Mather that this delay had occurred, for it was not until sunset on the Thursday that he even began to ram a few things into a kitbag in view of the journey.

The food-box was royally supplied by gifts from the generous Urumchi people, who vied with one another in making this an opportunity to express their appreciation of the two men who had lived and worked in their midst for so many years. The Governor sent us an ample supply of tinned food for the road, and of tea, sugar, cake, biscuits, bread and candles there was more than we could carry. Russian friends had sent cakes and a supply of delicious conserves, the like of which are met in no country but Russia, made from mountain strawberries, which are plentiful in Urumchi.

496 The men who had accompanied us from Suchow were now very anxious to return, so we had made an application for a passport to enable them to cross through Hsinghsinghsia. Naturally, all concerned felt great

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang Al 1

anxiety as to what might await them at the frontier, 486 and it was not until we were home in Europe that we heard how they fared when passing into Kansu. On arrival at Hsinghsinghsia they presented their passports to an officer whom they failed to recognise, but who at once made himself known to them as the man whom we had picked up, dying of thirst, outside Ansi: 'Pass on,' he said, 'I know you, and owe my life to your party, and to the ladies who gave me a place on their carts. You may leave when you please.'

Molly was to remain as a guest in Mr. Hunter's stable 500 until we should need her again, and from news since received, evidently continues to enjoy more than her due of care and attention. Little as our baggage seemed when we were packing our three small valises, by the time all was collected it made a formidable pile. Though the heat was intense we were each obliged to take a fur coat, knowing what bitter cold nights lay ahead, while a kettle, saucepan and iron tripod were necessary for cooking purposes. Packets of tracts and gospels were essential, and we each required a fair-sized cushion, to use by day in the cart and by night as a pillow.

When the tarantass arrived the driver had already captured a place for his large bag of grain, and a pocket, capable of great expansion, hung also at his elbow, the use of which became apparent on the journey. An hour of hard work saw the cart packed and roped, and each bundle in its place, but the remaining space was indeed a tight fit for three, although we consoled ourselves with the usual fallacious hope that so many of the packages containing food the load must diminish every day! A group of friends was waiting outside the city gate to bid us farewell, and here, too, we had to part with the faithful companions from Suchow, whose care had done so much to mitigate the difficulties of the

600 journey. It was hard for our driver to restrain his horses until we had taken leave, and no sooner was the 494 final word 'ping-an tsai'—'peace be with you'—spoken, than he scrambled to his seat, lashed his team, and instantly the horses sprang forward, breaking into a quick trot. They proved to be in good condition, and we found that travelling by tarantass was comfortable, and indeed far less wearying than by Chinese cart. Moreover we were able to cover six miles per hour at a steady pace, exactly doubling our former speed, the seven hundred miles to Chuguchak being accomplished in a fortnight, whereas by Chinese cart it would have been [491] a journey of twenty-two days. The roads were good, and the jingling bells, the gaily-painted circus hoop, and the freely-harnessed, trotting horses made a cheerful *ensemble*, while at each half-stage there was a wayside inn where we could buy hot water and make tea.

600 Mr. Hunter had, at the last moment, decided also to come with us as far as Chuguchak. His little ammunition-cart was, therefore, like our own tarantass, laden to its uttermost capacity. Mr. Mather used his own horse, while Nimga rode by Mr. Hunter's cartside. 464 There was a great deal of traffic on the road, carts of merchandise from Russia and Ili constantly passing us. 431 On the first day we met twelve carts laden with tin and galvanised iron pails, such as are so popular on the Urumchi market, and without which no traveller moves; matches, sugar, and leather formed the cargo of many 485 others. It was long after dark when we reached the first inn at Changki. Every room was occupied, and the courtyard was full of vehicles laden with grain, cotton and water-melons. Each driver was sleeping near his merchandise, and the stalls were crowded with beasts that kicked, squealed, and bit at each other throughout the night. Seeing that there was no

[1] [From Urumchi-- Analyst]

sleeping accommodation to be had, we contented our- 185
selves with our cart. Some time before dawn the yard
was astir. Every carter threw a measure of grain into
his animal's trough, watered the beasts, then called to
the landlord to settle the account, which transaction
was always accompanied by squabbling and cursing,
but not until the required amount was handed over did
the big double doors open, and allow the carts to pass
out. We, too, were up early, and for breakfast had the
unaccustomed luxury of a bowl of warm milk which an
old Chantow ladled out from a brass pot, in which it
was kept hot over a brazier.

We were now entering the district known as 'Fly 136
Land,' a name which speaks for itself, and from this
time until we reached the higher and more arid
land near Chuguchak, our meals were made revolting
by these loathsome pests, which also made rest or
sleep by day impossible. Knowing this, we had
brought lengths of mosquito netting with which all
our food was covered and in which we wrapped our
provisions, but still the table was a black, moving
mass of winged horrors. Soon after midday we were 133
at Hutupi—a thirty-mile stage—which we accomplished 241
with great ease. The range of the Tian Shan, culminating
in the glistening Bogdo, made a most striking
background, and the land around the villages was very
fertile, producing good crops of millet, wheat and
sorgum. At the Moslem inn where we stayed, all the 185
best rooms were occupied by the family of the innkeeper
himself, but we always had access to the harem,
and through the womens' court a little back door took
us straight out into fields near running water, where we
enjoyed space and some coolness. The lane at the back 363
of the house was also the connecting link with the back- 291
door of every house on the north side of the village, and

[363 as soon as we appeared women and girls emerged on
291 every side and sat down with us, forming a gay picture
with their brightly coloured dresses and white veils
thrown up against the green cornfields behind.

562 The Moslem women are intelligent, but are only viewed
as providing temporary gratification to their husbands,
who take them into favour or thrust them aside at
pleasure, even divorcing them or bringing fresh wives to
the home on the slightest provocation. The concentrated
contempt and hatred of a lifetime were
stamped on the face of one discarded woman, who, at
the mention of her husband, drew herself up, and said :
'Men! they are not men, they are beasts!' The
tragedy of the Moslem woman's life makes the opportunity
for the Christian woman missionary to present
the Gospel of spiritual liberation which she preaches.

485 Our daily meals consisted of tea and bread in the
grey dawn before starting, but on the longest stages we
now always found a halfway house where we could
000 sometimes buy hard-boiled eggs ; the real meal of the
day, however, was made when our march was completed,
and into our own little iron pot we put a piece of
meat and some vegetables, which we boiled together,
ladled out the soup, and divided the meat, Nimga
being always ready to finish what remained! The
following day we had a long stage of fifty miles, but our
driver kept his beasts well fed, and they took the road
in fine style, accomplishing the journey in nine and a
361 half hours. The town of Manas which we reached that
evening, though a busy market-centre, gives the
traveller no idea of the size of the agricultural district
241 which surrounds it. Here is the richest and best
watered farming country to be found within range of
Urumchi on the north. Its population is almost
wholly occupied in farming, and wheat, rice, maize,

vegetables and fruit, especially grapes and apples, find 241
a ready market in the capital. The grapes were the
largest we had ever seen, and we carried in the cart an
abundant supply which more than made up for the
lightening of our load by the bread we had consumed!
We were now only a few miles from the Manas River, 133
which is the most important stream in this part of 491
Turkestan. Its source is in the Celestial Mountains,
but it finally loses itself in the sand. A little earlier in
the season, when the snows were melting, the Manas
River is often impassable, and a Chinese lady friend
had a few weeks earlier been upset into the water and
nearly lost her life. We were now in the last days of
August, and it was already cold in the heights of the
Tian Shan, therefore we had no cause to fear the sudden
treacherous rise of the water which comes from the
melting snow, and we crossed without difficulty.

Our next stopping-place was Ulan-Usun—'Blue 485
Water'—where we had the advantage of occupying the 353
inn room which had been papered and swept for the
use of the Governor's son, who had preceded us on his
way to Zaisan. Fresh red paper with eulogistic phrases
decorated the door frame; clean matting covered the
kang, and the court had been generally tidied up in
honour of such an important guest. The flies, however, [136]
still remained.

The country here was splendid grazing ground, 233
covered with tall 'chi-chi' grass. The Mongolian 221
nomads pitch their tents on this plain during the winter
months, when the cold drives them down from the
higher pastures.

Our driver, though a surly cross-grained fellow, was 0-00
beginning to thaw under our constant friendly advances.
His knowledge of Chinese was very poor, but the
present of a bunch of grapes or a piece of new bread,

000 melted his hard heart, and his good opinion of us was strengthened when he came to know that we as scrupulously abstained from swine's flesh as did any follower of the prophet. 'Huda ti ren'—'People of God'—he often said, when speaking of us to bystanders. At fixed periods he would stop the cart, spread his coat, and recite his prayers. He had a remarkable capacity for finding lost property, and this no doubt accounted for the voluminous bag which always hung by his side in the cart. Once, he found a length of rope dropped by another carter; a small bundle of cotton, camel's hair, or an apple fallen from a basket on other occasions were collected. But one day he picked up a good straw hat, and his delight was so great that he celebrated the event by cutting up a melon and giving each of us a slice, after which he chuckled audibly, until we reached the next stage. Part of the time he wore the hat, but later on he slung it to the matting-cover, and this was his downfall, for at the inn a gentleman walking past stopped and stared, and then sent his servant to tell our man that this was his master's hat, and must be returned. In the early morning he was always alert, and as soon as the carts of merchandise had moved on brought a small brush from the recesses of his hold-all with which he swept up the fodder left in the troughs, and put it carefully into his bag, a satisfactory haul insuring good temper for the day. It was such proceedings that secured for him the nickname of Sandy Macnab! As we neared the end of the journey he became so friendly as to condescend to borrow our teapot, and before he left us at Chuguchak he bade us an affectionate farewell, saying: 'You are *good* people; just one family; father, brother and sisters!'

484 As we proceeded on our long journey, we realised how well-advised we had been in the choice of the season

during which we travelled. Earlier in the summer the 484
Manas and other rivers constitute a real peril. The
cold in Turkestan and Southern Siberia in early winter
increases the hardship of the way, and when the spring
thaw sets in, the roads around Urumchi are sometimes
impassable for weeks, owing to mud-pits which are so
extensive that no cart can negotiate them.

CHAPTER XLIII

ARRIVAL AT CHUGUCHAK

On September 2nd we sighted Hsihu. It is an [487]
important town surrounded by a considerable area of 443
irrigated land, where was the junction of the Ili and 366
Chuguchak main roads. The place presented the usual
aspect of a central point used by farmers as a market.
The streets were very countrified; nevertheless large
sums of money pass from hand to hand between the
grain merchants and their customers. There were the
usual bazaars, fruit and vegetable vendors, and general
shops where travellers might buy a pail, basin, towel,
soap, or cigarettes, while herbalists showed a dusty
store of rhubarb, cardamoms, liquorice, fennel, cloves,
and ginger. The inns were crowded with caravans [485]
travelling to Ili, or arriving from Siberia. Knowing
that even by tarantass we should not reach Chuguchak
for another ten days, and that on leaving this fertile
land we should pass through a barren country providing
neither fruit nor vegetables, we loaded up once more
with cucumbers, melons, and grapes, and late in the
evening a vine-grower appeared carrying a basket of
splendid fruit freshly cut, on which we all feasted for
several days. A long stage of sixty miles, the latter 133
part of which was over a sandy waste between tamarisk 491

491 mounds and clumps of saxaul, brought us to the l
of the Kueitun River, by the banks of which
133 village where we spent the night. The river, whi
wide and rapid, was crossed by a good bridge.
our inn court we had access to the bank, so w
advantage of the running water to wash a few c
not that we expected to make them the clea
dipping them in the yellow flood, but as fleas we
bad we hoped that some of them would be carrie
by the force of the current.

At 2-30 a.m. Sandy Macnab fetched us out of
491 an early start. A twenty-five mile drive, ove
sand mixed with loess, brought us to one sin
where a handsome Chantow woman and her da
wearing red veils, talked to us while we boiled a
pan of hot water and cooked a meal. There w
one well, with a very poor supply of water.

[312] The thirty miles of the afternoon stage to Ha
traversed a road so hard and even that it wou
been reckoned as a good motor-track in any c
Here we rested for the Sunday. We were now
577 region where many travellers had been robbed,
country was wild in the extreme and offered a
protection to brigand bands. The Governor had
a military guard at this point, to supply esc
needed, and a band of mounted police patro
167 roads. In this lonely spot lived two old men, br
who told us that at the age of fourteen and sixte
had run away together from their home in Sia
wandering to 'Kow Wai' had lived here eve
never returning to their relations, nor even ever
of them again. They were now both over sixt
of age, and their one pleasure in life was to sit a
with travellers from China, from whom they wer
weary of hearing of the glories of modern Sian.

A missionary journey does not supply many entertainments of the kind usually connected with the music-hall stage, but in this village there was a strange-looking man, wearing a Cossack cap of shaggy, black sheepskin, whose eyes danced with irresistible merriment. Our attention was drawn to this remarkable creature, who was sitting crouched in a corner of the courtyard, when all of a sudden the sound of a dogfight came from that direction. It was quite unmistakable—a big Tibetan dog was attacking a little, sharp-voiced Pekinese, such as the 'taî tai' loves to pet. We turned to see what was happening, but there were no dogs, and the sudden silence was broken by peals of laughter at our amazement. A moment later a flock of sheep and lambs were heard bleating and baaing, through every tone of the gamut. Then, most surprising of all, as the sound of the sheep ceased, a gramophone struck up a strident song in Russian, and this was followed by a visit to a poultry yard, the theatre, and other amazing ventriloquist feats. This clever performer subsequently told us that as a youth from a Shantung village he had placed himself for three years under the tuition of a renowned ventriloquist, who had trained him in the art of both hearing and reproducing sounds. The entertainment was really of the first order, far surpassing any Western performance to which we have listened, and most surprising of all, was the fact that without knowing Russian he was yet able to reproduce its sounds as conveyed through the gramophone. 500

We rose at 2.15 the next morning for the day's journey of seventy miles, and after a six hours' drive we saw a small, ragged tent pitched near the roadside at the back of which three camels were grazing. A woman stood by the tent door watching the road for passers-by. Her attitude and bearing showed her to 563

563 be a Qazaq. She wore a printed cotton gown to her
ankles, and over it a striped coat, cut with an old-
291 fashioned waistline, and down the back seam the stripes
met in fishbone pattern, while her head and face were
swathed in the nunlike headgear worn by all Qazaq
563 women. A call from our driver brought an acquiescing
response from her, and he drew up as she now moved
372 toward the great mound of drying cow-dung, which is
354 the inevitable adjunct to the Qazaq home. Her
fireplace was of the simplest, a deep hole hollowed in the
ground, and three iron rods and a hook, from which a
kettle hung. She dexterously placed the cakes of cow
dung on the embers, and blowing on them, in a short
time there was a glowing fire and a singing kettle. One
of her children was seen carrying water from the spring,
while the other was collecting fuel, but both now came
167 running to see us. Accepting her invitation we
574 entered the tent, and here found her husband, a Honan
man, lying down with the hateful opium pipe by his
733 side. Nevertheless, with the manners of a gentleman,
he at once rose, spread a carpet for us, and with a
gesture placed his pipe at our disposal, but adding as he
did so: 'You have none of these bad habits in your
country.' We sat and talked with this intelligent man,
who for some unknown reason had left China, wandered
across the desert, and thrown in his lot with the Qazaq
people, taking one of their women to be his wife
and the mother of his children. Another of these enigmatic
people gathered in this strangest of countries,
where a man's past is known only to himself, to be
buried and forgotten.

494 While we were talking Sandy Macnab was working. Producing a length of cotton material, of suitable size and shape to fit between the shafts of his cart, he proceeded to fasten it so as to form a feeding trough, in

which he mixed the fodder for his horses, for these fine 494
animals could only cover the long stages required of them by dint of great care and good feeding. This he gave them, and their good condition was a daily satisfaction to us. The friendliness between our driver and ourselves was becoming so warm that on an occasion such as this he was not only willing to borrow the teapot but the tea also! After an hour's rest we moved on, and by the late afternoon passed a lonely enclosure occupied by two Turki. The high hills around we knew to be the shelter of reckless robber-bands, and Mr. Hunter had firmly declared that we must at all costs push on to Kweitun by nightfall; Sandy, however, was differently disposed, and before he could be stopped he drove his team into the enclosure, and untied the circus hoop. We as a party, however, absolutely refused to dismount, and finally Nimga turned the horses' heads and led them out of the courtyard, when the stubborn Macnab was compelled to follow. For the next few hours he sang for our benefit sundry weird chants which, sounding as they did, so much like imprecatory liturgies, caused us to ask him what he was singing. 'Singing to Huda (God)' was his reply, and we knew that our surmise was correct—he was calling down vengeance on this party of Gentiles.

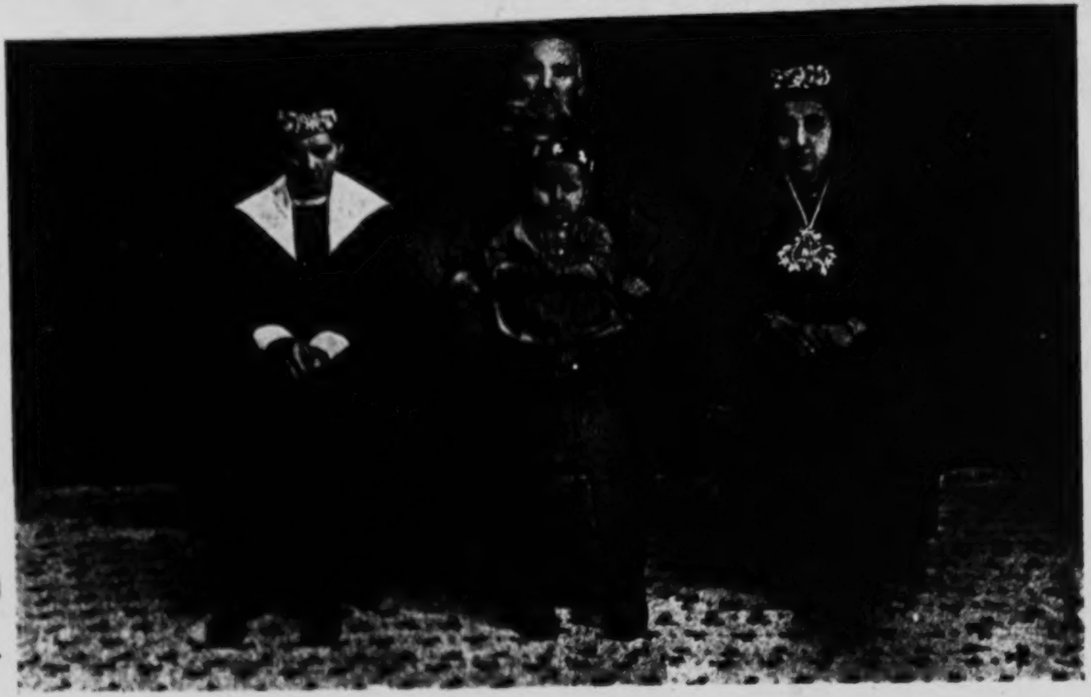
After a night in Yamatu we left on another forty-seven mile stage. The road at first was up and down [491]
hill, like a switchback, and as the long body of the tarantass makes it quite unsuited to sharp bends, we walked over the more dangerous parts. This proceeding greatly annoyed Macnab, but later on when we met a party whose faces were cut and bleeding from a spill, he had to admit that we were in the right. At midday we halted by another Qazaq tent. As soon as 563
the owners sighted us they came forward to ask if any 294

563 member of the party knew how to mend a sewing
294 machine. It seemed they had bought one from some destitute Russians, and now something had gone wrong, and they could make no further use of it.

One of the party (who is known to her fellow-travellers as a walking encyclopedia and an emporium of general knowledge), undertook to do what was necessary, and she was soon seated on a pile of rugs in the tent surrounded by a group of wondering nomads, as she skilfully made the needful repairs. Asking for some cotton she was given a small roll of cardboard, on which had been wound some coarsely-twisted skein thread. They had no other, but when we produced a reel of good English cotton and threaded it to the machine, the
563 delight of the whole family knew no bounds. While
this operation was in progress Mr. Hunter came into the
231 tent, and the fierce dog, always on guard, fastened its teeth into his trouser leg. We learnt then that the only safe way to enter a nomad's tent is backwards, keeping a sharp lookout for the watchdog, who can never be caught napping!

491 We spent the next night at Toli, and on leaving reached our maximum day's stage of one hundred miles. We got off at 5 a.m. and made good progress for the first hundred *li* to Laofengkow. On the way we met a band of Chinese, travelling back to Urumchi from Siberia, with a large supply of opium, which they had sown and reaped within Russian territory. After a brief rest we were on the road again for the second hundred *li* of our day's journey. We did so well that in a weak moment we gave way to Macnab's obstinate determination to keep in, over a lonely Gobi road, with another party of travellers, consisting of a Nogai gentleman and two charming
080 little boys, on their way to Moscow. It was late after-

[FACING P. 266]



A NOGAI.

Seated with a Turki wife on his left and a Qazaq wife on his right. The Turki woman is mother of the little boy.

To face page 266.

563
291

600 noon when we left Ertaochiao on the understanding that it was but a very short distance to an inn, which, though situated in a desert district, and very small, was reported to be comfortable. Mr. Hunter then kindly went ahead to make preparations at the inn, and we followed him over a country which became increas-
133 ingly desolate. The track led across a sandy waste,
491 between tamarisk mounds and an occasional tuft of 'chi chi' grass. There was no telegraph wire to guide us, and hour after hour we drove on through the same monotonous scenery, with no distinctive marks and no sign of the inn we were seeking. Both drivers confessed themselves baffled, and as the darkness fell they had to admit that we had missed our way, and although they dismounted and walked about seeking a landmark, they
579 found none. Moreover, travellers in these regions are loath to shout or to light camp-fires, for fear of revealing their whereabouts to horse-stealers. After a considerable time a voice was heard calling, which we recognised as that of Nimga, but on replying we were answered from another direction by Mr. Hunter, when gradually we all came together again and found that he, too, had missed the inn, so that we had no option but to push on. At midnight we were still going, but were suddenly brought to a standstill by entering a soft marshy ground, the extent and treachery of which it was impossible to gauge. Three of the carts of merchandise were already in the bog, from which they could not be extricated, so the horses' legs were secured with iron padlocks, while the whole party lay down on the ground, and in five minutes all were sound asleep. Four hours' drive on the next morning brought us at length to Chuguchak, where we were indeed glad to get our first substantial meal in twenty-four hours.

000 This town is known to Russians as Chuguchak, to

361 This town is known to Russians as Chuguchak, to
Chinese as Tacheng, but colloquially it is always called
136 Behya—' The Town of Seagulls '—because these birds, following the course of the Irtish River all the way from Arctic regions, collect here at certain seasons of the year. We had in fact already seen them in the Gobi further south, but could scarcely credit them to be really seagulls until we learnt that it is their habit to follow
[487] the great rivers as far as their sources. Geographically and politically the position of Tacheng is an important one, forming as it does the one outlet towards Siberia
361 for all Turkestan. It is a populous, busy city, with important Chinese and Russian quarters. There is a
[648] Russian Consul in residence, part of whose duties consists in the issuing of temporary passports to drivers and carters passing to and fro over the border. There
[205] are postal and telegraph offices and a military station.
[206] The postmaster, Mr. Chang, was very helpful and friendly. He knew something of foreigners' tastes,
[illegible] being a Hankow man, and suggested that ' the ladies might enjoy a drive round the city,' and he therefore
000 sent his Russian carriage and driver to show us the sights. Having completed the *Grand Tour* this man then asked us if we would like to see some more. ' Certainly,' we said, ' show us all there is worth seeing,' whereupon, with a grin, he whipped up his horse, and starting off at a good pace took us exactly over the same ground as before! The smart carriage, with strangers seated in it, attracted some attention on its first round, but when we appeared the second time the shopkeepers themselves came to their doors, exclaiming, ' Here they come again ! ' while one, making a movement with his hand, indicated that we were on a perpetual circular tour. To ' save face ' we therefore drew up before some of the shops, and enquired the price of many of the goods, though we had not the slightest intention

of adding to our baggage. The same evening Mr. and 600
Mrs. Chang entertained us to a delicious Chinese feast, and showed us all manner of kindness and hospitality, but some months afterwards we learnt that an armed madman running amok in Chuguchak severely wounded the postmaster, while his wife was shot dead.

The next stage of the journey was likewise to be 487
taken in a hired tarantass, and we now required two carriages, as Mr. Mather's riding horse was returning with Mr. Hunter to Urumchi. Two routes were available, and travellers in Kansu had repeatedly told us we should find a motor connecting Chuguchak and Semipalatinsk, but when we enquired about the possibility of such a conveyance the answer was a smile, the motor not having been that way for years! Our Nogai friend was proceeding directly north to Semipalatinsk, an eleven days' road journey, where he would take the train for Novo Sibirsk, the new capital of Siberia, and thence to Moscow. But we preferred the shorter road journey, which turning directly eastward, brought us through the Tarbagatai and the Sair Mountains, to the frontier station at Kuswun, as from here by the land of the Qazaqs, we should reach Topliefmus, on Lake
Zaisan. At this place a river boat was said to call once 650
or twice a week, and to be still running, although the season was getting late. We hoped to be able to continue the journey by boat to Omsk, but over this little-known route we could be certain of nothing until we had tested it.

At last the carts were hired, the passports viséd, provisions bought, and our only regret in leaving Chuguchak was that here we must now all say goodbye to Mr. Hunter, who was returning, with Nimga, to Urumchi.

AUTHORS' NOTE

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THE perennial problem of how best to convey to the English Reader the pronunciation of Chinese names, has been faced by the Authors, who, in order to avoid confusion, have very regretfully adopted the system of Romanisation as used by the Chinese Post Office. A glossary of names with corresponding Standard Romanisation is appended which, if read as written, will give the approximate correct pronunciation.

[300-301-blank]

GLOSSARY OF CHINESE NAMES

100

Postal Spelling.	*Standard Romanisation.*	*Postal Spelling.*	*Standard Romanisation.*
Ansichow	An si djou	Kueitun	Kuei tun
Anting	An ding	Kumuti	Gu mu di
Changki	Chang gi	Kushui	Ku shui
Changliushui	Chang liu shui	Kweihwating	Gwei kwa ting
Chekuluchüan	Che gu lu chüan	Lanchow	Lan djou
Chenfan	Djen fan	Laofengkow	Lao feng kou
Chepaitz	Che pai dz	Liangchow	Liang djou
Chienfutung	Tsien fu dung	Liaotun	Liao dun
Chikinpu	Chi gin pu	Linshui	Lin shui
Chiuchüan	Dziu chüan	Lotoyi	Lo tu yi
Erpu	Er pu	Lupan	Lu pan
Ertaochiao	Er dao chiao	Malienking	Ma lien ging
Fukang	Fu kang	Manas	Manas
Fuyi	Fu yi	Mati	Ma ti
Hami	Ha mi	Miaoerkow	Miao er gou
Hansantai	Han san tai	Muleiho	Mu lei ho
Heho	He ho	Paotowchen	Bao tou djen
Honan	Ho nan	Petuntz	Be dun dz
Hsiaotsao	Siao tsao	Pinchow	Bin djou
Hsihu	Si hu	Pingfan	Ping fan
Hsinghsinghsia	Sing sing hsia	Pingliang	Ping liang
Hungliuyüan	Hung liu yüan	Pulungki	Pu lung gi
Hungshan	Hung shan	Sankochüan	San go chüan
Hutupi	Hu tu bi	Sanpu	San bu
Hwahaitz	Hwa hai dz	Santai	San tai
Hwanglukang	Hwang lu gang	Santaokow	San dao gou
Hwochow	Hwo djou	Shachow	Sha djou
Kanchow	Gan djou	Shachüantz	Sha chüan dz
Kanglung	Kang lung	Shaho	Sha ho
Kansu	Gan su	Shansi	Shan si
Kaotai	Gao tai	Shantan	Shan dan
Kiayükwan	Gia yü gwan	Shensi	Shen si
Kinta	Gin ta	Shilatsa	Shih la dza
Kotzyentun	Go dz yen dun	Sian	Si an
Kow wai	Kou wai	Siaowan	Siao wan
Kuche	Ku che	Sining	Si ning
Kucheng	Gu cheng	Sinkiang	Sin giang

001

Postal Spelling.	*Standard Romanisation.*	*Postal Spelling.*	*Standard Romanisation.*
Suchow	Su djou	Tunhwang	Tun hwang
Tacheng	Da cheng	Tznichüan	Dz ni chüan
Tachüan	Da chüan	Ulanusun	Wu lan wu su
Taiyüanfu	Tai yüan fu	Urumchi	Wu lu mu tsi
Tashitow	Da shi tou	Wenshu	Wen shu
Tianshan	Tian shan	Yamatu	Ya ma tu
Tihwa	Di hua	Yatzchüan	Ya dz chüan
Toli	To li	Yenchihai	Yen chi hai
Towpu	Tou bu	Yiwanchüan	Yi wan chüan
Towshui	Tou shui	Yükoshu	Yü ko shu
Towtai	Tou tai	Yümen	Yü men
Tsikioking	Tsi gio dzing	Yungchang	Yung chang
Tsimusa	Dzi mu sa		

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927

AF13 Northwest China AF13

495
312
487

Map of Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan) marking each oasis on the main trade route across the Gobi Desert

THE HEAVY LINE INDICATES THE ROUTE FOLLOWED BY THE WRITERS.

[FOLDED MAP (A)]

[end map]

3;Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927

AF13 Northwest China AF13

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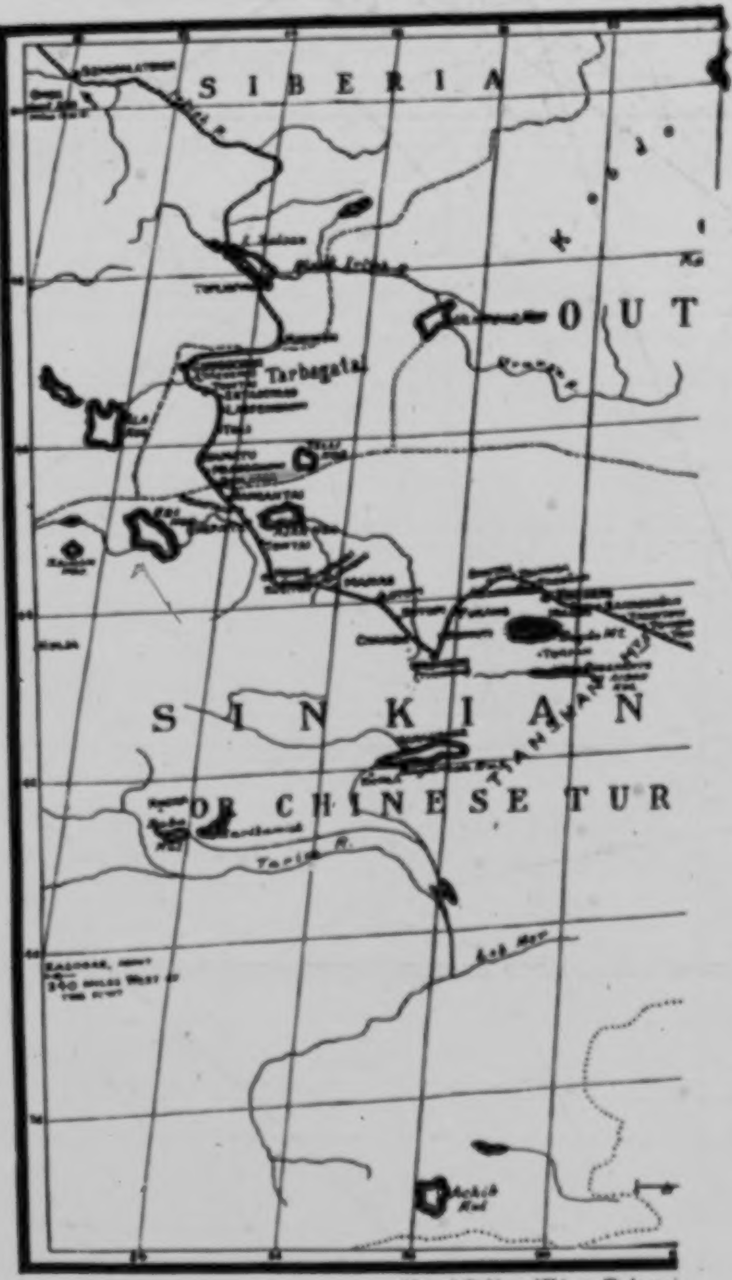
SIBERIA
OUT
Tarbagatai
SINKIAN
OR CHINESE TUR
Tarim R.
Lob Nor
Achik Kul

Map of Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan,
THE HEAVY LINE

[FOLDED MAP (B)]

3.Cable & French. M. 5. (1906) 1927

AF13 Northwest China AF13

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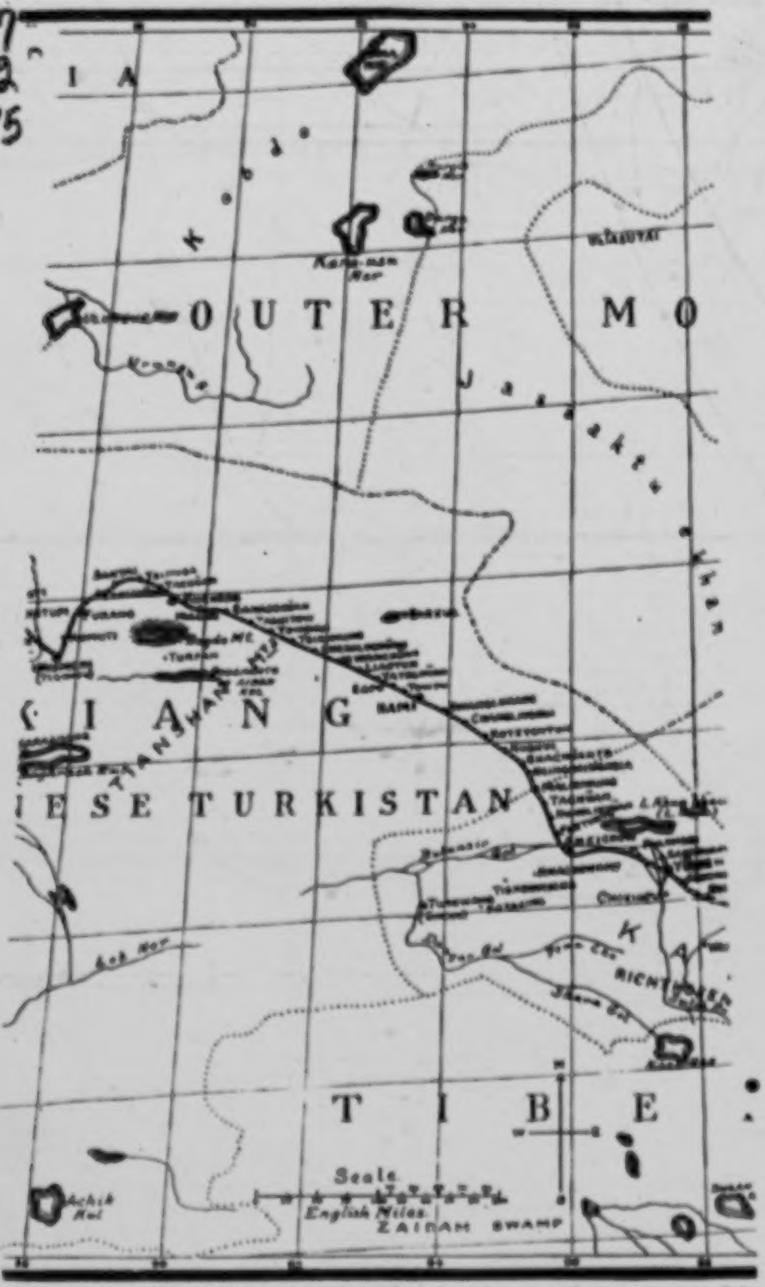
I A
OUTER MO
Kara-usu Nor
Uliassutai
Jasaktu Khan
TIAN SHAN MTS
KIANG
ESE TURKISTAN
Hami
Turfan
Lob Nor
K
TIBE
Achik Kul
Scale
English Miles
ZAIDAM SWAMP

Map of Sinkiang (Chinese Turkestan) marking each oasis on the main trade route across the Gobi

THE HEAVY LINE INDICATES THE ROUTE FOLLOWED BY THE WRITERS

FOLDED (C)

3;Cable & French M-5 (1936) 1927

AF13 Northwest China AF13

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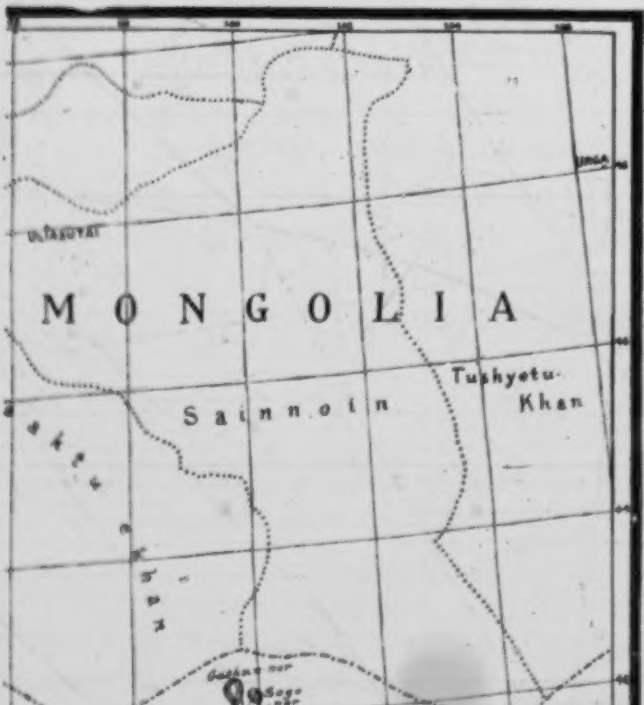
312
485


URGA
ULIASUTAI
MONGOLIA
Tushyetu-Khan
Sainnoin
Jasaktu Khan
Gashun nor
Sogo nor
INNER MONGOLIA
YUMEN
CHIUCHUAN
KANCHOW
KANSU
RICHTHOFEN MTS
YUNGCHANG
LIANGCHOWFU
LANCHOW
Koko Nor
Hwang Ho
TIBET

rade route across the Gobi Dese

THE AUTHORS

[FOLDED MAP (D)]